B"H

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE HAGGADAH SHEL PESACH

BY

HESCHEL GREENBERG

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE

ESSAYS ON PARSHAS HAGGADAH

Published by the

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Institute for Jewish Studies

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Rabbi Heschel Greenberg

212 Exeter Road

Williamsville, NY 14221

716-632-0467

716-245-9520

rabbigreenberg@yahoo.com

Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who, more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption

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INTRODUCTION

With praise to the A-mighty, I am presenting a collection of essays on the Passover Haggadah.

These messages were taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years. Some of them appeared around the Festival of Passover, while others were taken from the weekly messages on the Torah portions that recount the narrative of the Exodus. For the purpose of this occasion, I have reviewed these messages again, edited them slightly and added some insights here and there.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on, or adaptations of specific points in his essays and discourses. Some of the messages were taken from other sources, but, in most cases adapted, amplified

and expanded, and/or entirely altered. These essays were intended for an audience that includes those for whom citing sources and using Hebrew terms would make their reading of the text more cumbersome. I have therefore not cited the sources for much of the quotes from Biblical, Talmudic, Midrashic and Chassidic literature.

* * *

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash that "The time of your Redemption has arrived." The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

The essays on the Passover Haggadah are particularly relevant to Redemption in light

of the prophetic promise, "As the day that I took you out of the land of Egypt I will show them wonders."

It is my heartfelt hope that this effort at disseminating teachings about Moshiach will contribute to the process of changing our *Galus*/exile mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah. And may this effort, in turn, contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

Heschel Greenberg

18th of Adar, 5777

Williamsville, New York יע"א

SHABBOS HAGADOL- SHABBOS OF MATURITY

SHABBOS HAGADOL- SHABBOS OF MATURITY

What's so Great about this Shabbos?

There are many reasons given for the designation of the Shabbat that precedes Passover, as *Shabbat Hagadol*-the **Great** Sabbath. The primary reason given is that on the Sabbath immediately preceding the Exodus from Egypt the Egyptians were informed of the impending "tenth plague" in which all the Egyptian first born would die. Upon hearing this, many of the first-born demanded of the Egyptian leadership to let the Jews go. When they refused, a civil war ensued. Hence from that time onward, we mark this *Shabbat* as *Shabbat Hagadol*-the Great *Shabbat* because of the **great** miracle that occurred then

One is entitled to ask, why is this miracle considered so great? It did not involve any supernatural occurrences, nor did it seem to have helped the Jews in any meaningful way.

More specifically, we must understand why the term *gadol*-great is used in connection with this Shabbat? It could have been called, "*Shabbat haness*-the Sabbath of the miracle," or some other similar expression.

Cultivating Maturity

The Hebrew term *gadol* implies maturity and independence, as the Talmud states: "An adult child who is supported by his father is considered a minor, whereas, a minor who is independent is regarded as a *gadol*." Hence the word '*gadol*' is not intended to convey the idea that it was a great and spectacular miracle, but rather that it was a miracle that demonstrated a level of maturity.

The fact that the Egyptian elite fought against their own leaders on behalf of the Jewish people, was a sign of their independence and maturity.

This *Sabbath* is thus intended, among other things, to cultivate spiritual maturity in each and every one of us. This maturity can be applied to every aspect of life in general and to every aspect of Judaism in particular.

A Mature View of Judaism

For example: One can look at a Mitzvah simply as a good deed, or a beautiful Jewish tradition. Another more "mature" and sophisticated view of a mitzvah is to see it as our way of "connecting" with G-d. Moreover, a Mitzvah affects more than just the people involved in its performance; it has cosmic effects, for it is the medium that shapes and molds the entire universe to conform to the very purpose G-d had for its creation

Similarly, one can view the Torah simply as a beautiful piece of literature that teaches us right from wrong. This is true and valid. Yet a more advanced and mature approach to the Torah is to view it as Divine wisdom that transcends all aspects of creation.

Two Views on Freedom

With respect to freedom, which we celebrate on Passover, there can also be two perspectives. The "immature" or minimal view of freedom is to see it as an end. The more mature view is to view it as an opportunity to rise to a higher spiritual level.

Alternatively, in its simple formulation, freedom is the removal of external constraints; while a more mature and advanced understanding of freedom sees it as removal of the internal forces that inhibit us as well

In short, the less sophisticated level sees things in their most narrow sense, the view of the *gadol*, the mature view that is represented by this Sabbath, sees everything in its broader and deeper context.

Why before Passover?

One could raise the question, why is *Shabbat hagadol*—that gives us the ability to see things through the mature eyes of a *gadol*—situated right before Pesach? Why don't we

have a "Shabbat of Maturity" before Rosh Hashanah, or at some other time of the year?

Moreover, the Holiday of Passover seems to focus on the *katan*, the child: Children ask the "Four Questions;" we read about the "Four Sons," and indeed, many of the customs of the Seder revolve around children. Passover is also seen by the Prophet Ezekiel as the birth and infancy of the Jewish people. How then is it that precisely before this child-oriented holiday, we have a Sabbath that highlights the level and role of the *gadol*-the fully mature individual?

The answer to this question lies in a better understanding of the relationship between childhood and adulthood. There are two ways of viewing this relationship: One way is to see the child as an adult at heart; just waiting until the adult way of thinking fully manifests itself and the mature intellect comes out of its cocoon. A child is an adult in potential. The little girl or boy will play house, acting out the adult roles of mother and father. A healthy child fantasizes about adulthood because that is really what a child is.

Alternatively, we can view the adult as a child at heart. No matter how much we age and mature we still retain the child within us. Adults have their toys and often express a certain naiveté and innocence that punctuates the identity of a child.

In truth, both statements and perspectives are true. A child is an adult in waiting, and an adult is a child at heart. Thus, while a person must go from the level of a newborn to the level of maturity, one step at a time, one must know, from the very outset, that there is a higher and more advanced level. Even one who is just beginning his/her development must be made aware of the goal and objective of one's life.

Playing House

This Shabbat then can be viewed as our collective adult role playing; it represents the recognition that we are destined for greatness and that our experience of liberation will lead us inexorably to that goal.

Conversely, the fact that we follow the "Shabbat of Maturity" with an emphasis on

the child during Passover itself conveys yet another profound message. No matter how sophisticated we are, we must always seek to find and reveal the child within all of us; because it is that childhood innocence and purity that is truly liberating and G-dly.

Hence the Passover season is a synthesis of maturity and childhood. We attempt to see things from a mature vantage point, even while we capture the untainted innocence of the child within.

The Messianic Age Paradox

We can now reconcile the two apparently contradictory statements about the state of the Messianic Age. One the one hand, the Messianic Age is when we will reach the peak of maturity and sophistication. Yet, the Talmud applies the word Moshiach to children. If the Messianic Age is characterized as one of one of maturity, why is title Moshiach applied to little children?

In light of the foregoing analysis of the juxtaposition of Shabbat Hagadol-the Shabbat of Maturity to Passover-a Holiday for the

child in us, we can resolve this apparent contradiction. The future Messianic Age will indeed combine both qualities. On the one hand it will reveal within us total child-like innocence and purity, while we will simultaneously attain complete maturity.

Two Ways of Talking to Your Child

These two approaches towards the theme of Redemption—that of the child, the katan and the mature approach, that of a gadol—we find reflected in the words of Maimonides in his description of the way we must speak to our children during Passover:

"[A] father must teach the child according to his intelligence. How so? If he was a *katan*-a minor or *tipesh*-immature, he says to him 'my son, we were all slaves, like this maidservant or this slave, in Egypt. And on this night the Holy One blessed is He redeemed us and took us out to be free.' If the son was a *gadol*-an adult or mature and a *chacham*-wise, he informs him what happened to us in Egypt and the miracles that happened to us through *Moshe Rabeinu*.'

It all depends on the intelligence of the child."

If we analyze the wording of the Maimonides, it is difficult to see what is the difference between the way we inform the *katan* and the way we inform the *gadol.* In both cases he describes how we should essentially tell the child what happened in Egypt and that we were liberated by G-d. Upon closer examination, we could see many differences:

First, to the *katan* Maimonides writes "he says to him." To the *gadol*, he writes "he lets him know."

Second, to the minor or immature child, he prefaces the endearing words "my son," which is omitted when he speaks to the mature son.

Third, to the minor he emphasizes, "We were all slaves", whereas to the *gadol* he generalizes and says "what occurred to us in Egypt," not mentioning slavery at all.

Fourth, to the minor he mentions the fact that **G-d** liberated us, whereas for the *gadol* he stresses **Moses'** role.

The key to explaining all these differences is to understand that a *katan* or a *tipesh* is incapable of understanding the deeper nuances of the exodus. To the *katan* or *tipesh* the father has to speak soft spoken and simple words (represented by the word "*omer,* which really means "he says softly.")

The father must also preface the endearing words: "my son," as a way of creating a "connection" between himself and his child

In addition, by referring to his son as "my son" the father thereby creates a bridge between what happened to his generation of the Exodus, which was closer to the original experience and the son, for whom the experience is more remote.

Originally, when the Torah commanded the father to tell his son about the exodus, it was intended for the first generation that experienced the Exodus and bondage themselves. They were charged with the responsibility to tell the next generation about the exodus.

In order that the child who is either a *katan* or a *tipesh* will realize his/her connection to

the Exodus, the father tells him about his own experience. By addressing his child as "my son," he wishes to impress upon him that what happened to the father affected the son as well.

After connecting to the *katan*, and linking him to the events of the Exodus, the father must seek to provide him with a simple and straightforward message: We were slaves, but G-d redeemed us. The child must know that G-d is directly involved in our lives. This also explains why Maimonides directs the father to point to an actual slave to make the meaning of slavery and hardship real and meaningful, not just some abstract concept A *katan* and a *tipesh* has to be given illustrations to make the historical information real.

Thus, for the *katan* or *tipesh*, and the *katan* and *tipesh* within us, four things are imperative that we communicate to him or her:

First, our children must know and feel our love for them. Likewise, the child within us

must feel the love and warmth of our Father in Heaven.

Second, we must make our child feel connected to us. This is not just the feeling of love, but that there is a sense of continuity between one generation and the next. The child should not experience a generation gap. Likewise, the child in us must feel that it is connected to our heavenly Father; that it has a personal relationship with Him.

Third, we must make the child feel that G-d is directly involved in his or her life.

Fourth, we must make the child—and the child within—realize that he or she can relate to G-d's help in a concrete and tangible way.

These four elements in the way we deal with the child and the child within us is reflected in our plea for Moshiach that emanates from the heart of the child within us. This plea is essentially a plea to G-d to show us His love for us. We want G-d to connect with us and show us how He is involved in our lives, and make us feel that we are connected to Him. We will not be satisfied with just abstract

ideas. We want to see the Redemption in a tangible way.

Addressing the Mature Son

Returning to the way Maimonides describes the father's dialogue with his mature child as opposed to the immature one. When he speaks of the mature son, Maimonides, states: "he lets him know," instead of "he tells him." The mature son does not rely on the precise words of the father. The father uses a code of sorts that the mature child knows how to decipher and from which he "knows" what the father really wants him to know beyond the bare facts.

When the father speaks to the mature son he does not have to use the endearing words "my son," that he uses for the immature son. The mature son does not always have to be reminded of his father's love. Moreover, the love between father and son is so deeply felt within him that it cannot be expressed with words.

Third, to the mature son, the father generalizes and says "what occurred to us in

Egypt," not mentioning slavery at all as he does to the minor and immature son. The reason for this is that the mature sophisticated son knows that what happened in Egypt was far worse than just slavery. As terrible as the physical oppression was and is certainly not lost on the mature son, he is to be made aware of all that occurred in Egypt. The spiritual degradation, the descent into "forty-nine gates of impurity" their assimilating into the fabric of Egyptian pagan society etc. is part of the Egyptian experience that the mature son is made aware of and which moves him.

Moses' Role

Fourth, the mature son is not told about **G-d's** role. Rather it is Moses' role in the liberation that Maimonides writes, is emphasized.

This is because for the minor, the emphasis on Moses role could detract from his recognition of G-d's role in the exodus. For the mature son, by contrast, Moses' role in the exodus went hand in hand with

G-d's role, for Moses was not an intermediary that separates between G-d and Israel. Moses' transparency allowed him to reflect G-d's light to all. Moses role thus actually enhanced the people's appreciation for G-d's role.

Without Moses, G-d's light was obscured by the natural physical barriers to G-dly light. Only Moses' transparency and his devotion to the Jewish nation facilitated their ability to appreciate G-d and connect to Him.

Although, initially, we have to cater to the needs of the immature son, the Torah wants us to mature to the level of a *gadol* thereby obviating the need to the point that it no longer becomes necessary to address the immature part of our souls. We are not talking about the purity and innocence of the child—that we should always retain. We are discussing the need to ultimately abandon our childish perceptions of G-d and the Torah and our approach to life in general.

This mature level of understanding will characterize the Messianic Age, the "Age of Maturity." And while, as stated, the positive elements of the child such as its innocence

will always remain, the Age of Maturity will elevate all of us to the highest levels of knowledge—an age concerning which the prophet Isaiah wrote: And the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea."

Because we will have attained this degree of spiritual maturity, this age will lack the rivalry, hatred, pettiness, war and all the other ills of society, as Maimonides writes in the very end of his magnum opus.

Our way of preparing for this age begins at the *seder*. This is an opportunity to nurture the innocence of the child within us even as we reach an advanced and mature level of understanding of the dynamics of G-d, Moses and Redemption.

THE SEDER:
THE NEW WORLD ORDER

THE SEDER:
THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Avoiding the detours to freedom

The obsession with doing things in their proper order is exemplified in the Passover evening service known as the *Seder,* which means order. Despite the fact that the Passover Seder is devoted to the theme of freedom, which often implies the lack of order, freedom in Judaism demands it. Every step in the Seder gets us closer to the realization of our goal of freedom. Deviation from the order may end up causing detours that actually frustrate our ambitions to be free.

This emphasis on order can also be seen in the way the Jewish people were commanded

to build a Sanctuary soon after their departure from Egypt. And the construction of the *Mishkan* (the portable Sanctuary in the desert) was not incidental to the Exodus.

The purpose of their liberation from Egypt was to become G-d's servants as the Torah relates. In fact, Moses repeatedly told Pharaoh that he should let the people go so that they can bring offerings to G-d in the desert. This they did in the *Mishkan*.

Thus we can better appreciate the role of order in the way we conduct the *seder* and relive the experience of the Exodus from the way the Sanctuary was built.

Order in the Sanctuary

When it comes to constructing the Sanctuary, the physical one, as well as the spiritual one in our homes and hearts, one must not leave out any of the steps enumerated by the Torah. In addition, one must follow the order prescribed by the Torah for constructing the Sanctuary.

It would certainly not occur to one who purchases a machine, computer or any complex mechanism, to leave out some of the procedures, prescribed by the manufacturer for its functioning, or to alter the order in which these procedures should be performed.

Similarly, when we experience freedom that enables us to construct our internal Sanctuary, we must not overlook any of its details. Nor should we fail to follow the order in which these components are put together.

With this introduction in mind, we can appreciate the order in which Moses set up and furnished the Sanctuary. First Moses built the actual structure. Secondly he placed the Ark, the holiest part of the Sanctuary, in its innermost precinct. Following the placement of the Ark, Moses placed the Table, Menorah and Incense Altar inside the Sanctuary. Then he placed the Altar for sacrifices in the courtyard, outside of the Sanctuary. After he placed the Altar, he placed the *kiyor*, the laver—that was used by the priests to wash their hands and feet before performing the daily services in the

Temple—in between the Sanctuary and the Altar.

Out of order?

Commentators raise the question, why the laver was placed out of order? All the other components of the Sanctuary seemed to have been placed in the order of their proximity to the Sanctuary: from the Ark in the innermost precinct of the Sanctuary to the curtain at the entrance of the courtyard. Why then was the laver—which was closer to the Sanctuary than the Altar—placed after the Altar, which was further removed from the Sanctuary?

To understand this anomaly we should reflect on the function of the laver and its relationship with the Altar. Before performing the service on the Altar, prior to getting closer to G-d (which is, after all, the simple meaning of the Hebrew word for sacrifice- *Korban*: getting close) one must be sure to cleanse oneself from the undesirable influences and attitudes that one might harbor. Yet, we must realize that the goal of the process of spiritual cleansing is to get closer to G-d.

We must realize that the process of self-examination and purification, as important as it is, is nevertheless not the goal, just the means. And while it precedes the process of sanctification—thus the laver was placed closer to the sanctuary than the Altar—it is **not** the goal. The goal is to take the "outside" world and offer it to G-d, the function of the Altar.

Pass-over in the Mishkan?

Thus, Moses placed the laver first, to underscore that the cleansing was only a prerequisite and prelude to, but not a substitute for, the process of getting close.

Indeed, there are times that one must "Pass-over" the normal sequence and not wait for the cleansing process to be completed and begin by introducing oneself to holiness even before their purification process has been completed.

In normal times, when the challenge for us is to simply climb the ladder of spiritual refinement rung by rung, one must be careful to do things in the correct order.

Skipping a rung can sometimes prove disastrous. But when we are dealing with unusual times—such as when we must flee from Egypt lest we descend to the fiftieth level of impurity—we cannot afford to limit ourselves to incremental growth; we must sometimes jump and pass-over, reversing the order, even as we are engaged in the process of the *seder*. And as we shall see, the very beginning of the *seder*, which means order, involves a reversal of *seder*.

The Reversal of Order in the Seder

The *seder,* which, as stated, means order, actually begins with a list of the activities of the evening. The first two items on the list, ironically, appear to be out of order! First it says, *kadesh*-sanctify and then *urchatz*-cleanse. Shouldn't we first have to cleanse ourselves and then sanctify ourselves?

Chassidic commentators explain that on the night of Passover, G-d "passes over" the conventional order of things and provides us with a new order, where we have the ability to realize holiness even before we have

attained purification. This is analogous to the idea of placing the Altar first and only then mentioning the Laver: First sanctification and then purification.

Pass-over into the Age of Moshiach

As we approach the Holiday of Passover and as we await the imminent arrival of Moshiach who will usher in a "new-world-order"—we should understand that at times we have to override the normal and conventional sequence of events, by reaching for the goal, even before we execute some of the standard prerequisites.

Whereas the exile mode dictates that we must conform to the proper order, the liberation mode demands that we change gears and Pass-over the normal order, even as we ask G-d to do the same, by liberating the world from its limitations. And while we must never shirk our obligations to cleanse ourselves, we must always keep our eyes on the goal of bringing Moshiach and the ultimate Redemption. If that means passing over the routine order, so be it!

MAGID
TELL THE STORY
FREEDOM OF SPEECH

MAGID-TELL THE STORY

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Telling the Story

Pesach, our sages tell us, is more than just a commemoration of an **ancient** people's drive for independence saga. One of the salient themes of the Seder is the need to feel as if **we** are actually the ones who are going through this liberation process. Quoting the Mishnah, the author of the *Haggadah* (the text recited at the *seder*) states: "In every generation, every individual is obligated to see himself as if he had left Egypt."

The manner by which we attempt to experience our own liberation is primarily through the recitation of the Haggadah—by way of telling. Of course, there is a need to eat matzah and moror (bitter herbs), but the most important feature of the *seder*, around

which everything else revolves, is the verbal part: simply telling the story.

According to the Ari, the great Kabbalist of the sixteenth century, the very word Pesach (Passover) alludes to the significance of speech in relation to the forces of liberation. The word Pesach is a composite of two words: *peh* (mouth) *sach* (speaks).

Chassidic thought explains the words of the Ari in the following manner:

Before the Exodus, the Jews were not only in physical bondage, but their power of speech was also impaired. Speech has the capacity to express one's innermost and most powerful intellectual and emotional abilities. When speech is not free, the entire person is likewise not free.

The Jewish people were so crushed that they could not fully express themselves. All they could do was to cry out to G-d. Their faculty of speech was thus also in exile.

The Parallel: Divine Speech

The faculty of speech that we possess is a reflection of G-d's faculty of speech with which He created the Heaven and Earth.

When the Jews were enslaved in Egypt, G-d's "speech," as it were, was also concealed and in exile. This means that G-d's creative power, the words through which He creates the world, were hidden. When one looks around and sees only natural phenomena, failing to see the Divine creative power that is the true animating force of all existence, it could be said that G-d's faculty of speech is in exile and in need of being liberated.

G-d's "Celebration of Freedom"

Pesach, with all of the miracles that clearly demonstrated to the Egyptians and the world, that there is a Creator who is in total control of the universe, is the holiday of liberation for G-d as well!

With Passover, G-d's speech (read: His creative powers and overt involvement in the world) was beginning to express itself.

Passover is thus when both G-d and the Jewish people experience true freedom of speech; freedom of expression.

Two Forms of Speech

But, there are two forms of speech. The theme of one of the Torah portions that coincides with Passover is the parsha named *Metzora*. This parsha is named after a person whose unbridled negative speech, leads to the development of a skin disorder known as *tzara'at*, the treatment of which involves quarantining the person so afflicted.

The word *Metzora*, is actually a composite of two words: *Motzi Ra*, one who searches for, discovers, elicits and expresses the evil of another.

Speech—good or bad—has the capacity to express latent qualities of either goodness or evil. When one speaks of another person's faults, it has the capacity to elicit these faults and make them more pronounced. This too is a form of liberation—albeit—negative; liberating the negative energies that may

have remained locked up within the individual.

Good and Evil Liberation

This form of liberation, however, is the very antithesis of Pesach. It is identified with the process of Pharaoh, which Kabbalists say is also a composite of the two Hebrew words: Peh Ra, the mouth of evil, or the force that elicits the hidden evil.

Pe-sach, thus, represents the emergence of the power of positive speech. Pesach is not simply a Holiday of freedom, but a holiday of liberation of positive energy. Freedom, in and of itself can be destructive and degrading.

When we speak of the Exodus, we elicit the forces that bring about the liberation of our own Divine potential and the Divine potential of the entire world.

Next Year in Jerusalem!

At the end of the Seder we declare: Next year in Jerusalem! At first glance this seems like a wishful prayer.

In truth, this declaration is more than just a prayerful wish for the end of exile and return to Jerusalem. The very exercise of telling the story of liberation is what brings about our own individual liberation as well as the liberation of the Jewish people and the entire world from exile.

After completing the recitation of the Haggadah (a word that means both telling and "drawing down") we have not only told a story, but we've also engaged in the peh-sach exercise. We've liberated our power of speech and the power of Divine speech that will serve to actualize the hidden forces of Redemption so that by the time next year will roll around, we will all be in Jerusalem with Moshiach.

At that time G-d's speech will resonate throughout the world.

THIS IS THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION

"A KOSHER AND HAPPY PASSOVER"

THIS IS THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION

"A KOSHER AND HAPPY PASSOVER"

This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is in need, let him come and conduct the Seder of Passover. This year [we are] here; next year in the land of Israel. This year [we are] slaves; next year [we will be] free people.

What's the Connection?

Commentators have pointed out that these three sentences seem to be disjointed and disconnected. What connection is there in announcing that this is the bread of affliction with inviting the hungry and needy? And how do the two first sentences connect to the third one about next year in the Land of Israel and freedom?

One answer is that before we invite the hungry and needy we must "warn" them that they will be getting "bread of affliction." We then declare that because of our feeding the poor and needy and fulfilling the Mitzvah of tzedakah, we will be liberated from the exile we are presently in.

However, we must try to find a more direct thematic connection between these three sections.

Moreover, the question has been asked, why this introductory section o the Haggadah is written in Aramaic and not in Hebrew as the rest of the Haggadah?

And, why was this paragraph placed at the very beginning of the section dedicated to telling the story of the Exodus?

A Kosher Passover

To discover a connection between these three apparently disconnected parts, we must delve more deeply into obsession we have on Passover to get rid of *chametz,* the leavening and all products that contain leavening. Thus,

the traditional greeting for Passover is: *Chag kasher v'sameiach*-Have a **Kosher** and Happy Passover. The simple meaning of kosher in relation to Passover is to get rid of the *chametz*,

Grain can become *chametz* when it comes in contact with water and is not baked in a timely fashion. Contrary to a popular misconception, the mixture of flour and water alone suffices for the process of leavening to happen. It does not need the admixture of yeast.

Chametz, in effect, does not necessarily involve adding anything to the mixture of flour and water. Yet, the same mixture of flour and water can be Matzah, but when allowed to rise, ever so subtly, it is the most non-kosher substance known to the Jewish person.

The Reprehensible Nature of Chometz

So reprehensible is *chametz* during Passover that the Torah forbids its consumption, use of it for any benefit, and even possessing it.

To ensure that the holiday is truly Kosher in all senses of the word, one must get rid of not only the physical *chametz*, but also the *chametz* in the spiritual sense.

Chametz, in the spiritual sense, has been understood to refer to the person who has an inflated ego; the arrogant person.

The question can be asked, why, if *chametz* is considered so abominable because of its message of ego, why was it forbidden only on Passover and not on other major Holidays. Our question is directed only towards other Holidays and not about year round consumption. Year round, one can argue, *chametz* conveys a positive message. One must have pride and stand up for their beliefs even in a world where Judaism is constantly challenged and threatened with all forms of alien influences. To combat the haughty nature of our secularized, hedonistic and hostile to Judaism environment, we must be able to stand tall and hold our own.

But, the question still remains, why on Holidays other than Passover, where we stand

above the fray of worldly influences, are we not restricted with regard to *chametz*?

Senseless Hatred and Getting out of Egypt

Chametz poses a problem only with regard to the process of liberation. To be free in the full sense of the word, one must be able to tolerate others. The person who is obsessed with self, who has no regard for others, will always feel that everyone around him or her is causing him to suffocate.

A story is told of a *chasid* who complained to his Rebbe that everyone in the synagogue that he attended "steps all over me."

The Rebbe's response to him was, "If you would not spread yourself throughout the synagogue the other people might have room to step without treading upon you." Those individuals whose *chametz* nature causes them to inflate are going to inevitably clash with everyone and everything. These unfortunate people always feel that they are being tortured by everyone and despite their freedom and expansiveness they feel they are cooped up in a tiny prison cell.

Therefore, when we celebrate the "Season of our Freedom" it is crucial that we get rid of the *chametz* personality so that we can experience true freedom.

Indeed, we find that Moses was concerned with the fact that there were informers and slanderers amongst the Israelites that would prevent them from being liberated. When a person is so self-absorbed and obsessed, they consider everyone their enemy and they will do whatever it takes to put them down. This attitude Moses thought could prevent them from being liberated, since even when they are truly free they will never know it.

Senseless Hatred and Exile

Similarly, our Sages inform us that the exile we are in since the destruction of the Second Temple close to 2,000 years ago was brought on by *sinat chinam* or senseless hatred.

*Sinat chinam, s*enseless hatred, the very cause and characterization of exile is rooted in an inflated ego. When we are obsessed with ourselves we cannot tolerate the existence of another. Getting rid of the inflated *chometz*

is thus the means through which we get rid of Galus/exile.

The Connection

We can now understand the connection between, "This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt" and the following two statements, "Whoever is hungry let him come and eat, whoever is needy let him come and celebrate Passover with us. This year we are here, next year in the Land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free."

In light of the above analysis of the connection between *chametz* and our intolerance of others and our inability to be free, these three sentences flow seamlessly.

As we begin to plug into the dynamics of freedom, we must internalize the theme of Matzah, and humility. Otherwise we will remain hopelessly mired in narcissistic exile. Thus, we declare this is the Bread of Affliction our ancestors ate in the Land of Egypt. If not for the fact that they—as a whole—internalized the message of Matzah

and humility, they could not have been redeemed.

Therefore, we continue, "Whoever is hungry let him come and eat, whoever is needy let him come and celebrate Passover with us." Now that we have identified ourselves with our ancestors' eating of Matzah and the humility it represented, we can now relate to and identify with the hunger and needs of others. Indeed, the barometer as to whether we've gotten rid of our *chametz* is the degree to which we see the needs of others.

We then continue and conclude with "This year we are here, next year in the Land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free." Now that we've experienced true spiritual liberation, at least to the extent that we recognize the needs of others, we are ready to be transported to the Land of Israel as free people.

We can now understand why this paragraph was composed in the Aramaic language. Aramaic is the language of exile. If we are to be liberated we must first recognize that we are in an intolerable exile. This awareness

alone can humble us and get us on the road to Redemption.

This paragraph was therefore placed at the very beginning of the Haggadah because our hope of unleashing the power of Redemption for the future lies in our ability to recognize the dynamics of our internal exile: inflated egos and our inability to see the needs of others.

A Happy Passover

However, now that we've explained why this paragraph is at the beginning of the Haggadah, the question can be reversed. Why do we first drink a cup of wine--one of the Four Cups—before reciting this paragraph? Each cup of wine represents one step in the process of the Exodus. Shouldn't we then have to expose the cause and remedy for the exile before we can drink the cup of redemption?

The answer is that in addition to the need for a kosher Passover to ensure Redemption we also need to have a "happy" Passover. Going out of exile requires joy. Depression

and lack of life and enthusiasm are also characteristics of exile. To get out of exile, we must generate feelings of joy.

Thus, even before we declare "This is the Bread of Affliction etc." we recite the blessing over the first of four cups of wine. In order to be humble and reach out to others, we must have at least a modicum of joy. Only after we drink the "wine that gladdens the heart" will we be more receptive to the message of humility and generosity that leads to freedom.

But we desist from pouring the second cup of wine until later, because our joy cannot be complete until we share our blessings with others. As Maimonides notes that to truly experience joy we must also make others happy, for true joy is experienced only when it is shared by all.

Kosher before Happy

Nevertheless, in the traditional greeting the word kosher appears before the word happy. To experience true and unmitigated joy one must get rid of the inflated ego. As long as

one is preoccupied with his or her own needs and interests, one cannot experience true joy. There is never enough to satisfy the appetite of the person driven by ego and self-interest.

By having a kosher Passover—getting rid of the *chometz* that takes place even before the onset of Passover and the Seder—one can then have a joyous Passover. The absence of ego enables us to feel the joy and to share it with others, which enhances the joy. And it is this joy that serves as the catalyst to get out of exile.

Having a kosher and happy Passover will surely lead us to the time when all *chometz*—symbolically speaking—will be removed, with eternal joy prevailing.

ASK, CHILD

ASK, CHILD

"Here the child asks "Mah Nishtana?"

What makes this night different from all [other] nights?

On all nights we need not dip even once, on this night we do so twice!

On all nights we eat chametz or matzah, and on this night only matzah.

On all nights we eat any kind of vegetables, and on this night maror!

On all nights we eat sitting upright or reclining, and on this night we all recline!

"Here the Child Asks"

Asking questions is an integral part of the Seder. It does not suffice to simply tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt; one must tell the story in response to the questions of the children. In fact, there are four questions that

are traditionally asked by the children at the beginning of the Seder.

In many *Haggadot* (the classical text recited at the Seder) the "Four Questions" are prefaced by the following, instructional phrase:

"Here the child asks..."

At first blush, these words were intended to indicate that this is the appropriate place for the child to ask the questions. However, Chassidic commentators are quick to point out that these introductory words actually convey a poignant message.

We are All G-d's Children

The word child here is a metaphor for all of us, who are G-d's little children. At this point, when we are ready to begin the process of retelling the story of the Exodus, each and every one of G-d's children can ask their Heavenly Father for all of their needs and requests.

One is entitled to ask, why is this particular place singled out for asking G-d for our

needs? Isn't the process of asking G-d for our needs the function of prayer? And don't we, in fact, pray three times every weekday; asking G-d for our needs? Why do we need to set aside a few moments before the child asks the Four Questions to turn our hearts Heavenward and petition G-d for our needs?

No Difference between Child and Adult

The answer, lies in the unique status of the child that all of us, including the adults, assume on the night of Passover. Despite the fact that we are all G-d's children, there is a special place in G-d's "heart" for the innocence and purity of one who is also very literally a child. Even the most hardened of people, seem to melt away when they are in the presence of a child.

This phenomenon, like all phenomena, is a representation of the way G-d relates to us. Because G-d has a special feeling for children, we, who were created in G-d's "image," also relate to children in an unusual way.

And while the distinction between adult and child applies throughout the year, it breaks

down on Passover eve, particularly at the time that we are required to exhibit the childlike quality of inquisitiveness.

Where is Here?

Let us now return to the introductory remark that precedes the Four Questions:

"Here, the child asks..."

"Here," refers to the Seder night, when we relive the experience of the Exodus, which marked the birth of the Jewish People and their entry into the stage of infancy.

"Here," more specifically, refers to the point that is reserved for children. The energy generated by all the little children, poised to express their innocence and inquisitiveness, awakens the child in all of us. And as G-d's children, we can ask for anything.

"Here," refers even more specifically to the geographic and spiritual state of exile in which we are situated.

As we just concluded saying:

> "This year we are here, next year we will be in the Land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free."

At this point, where we realize the fact that we are still "here," in exile, this is where the child in us is aroused to ask, G-d why? Way are we still in exile? Why are we not totally free, both physically and spiritually?

When we ask, with the innocence and purity of a child, why—though this night may indeed be very different—why are we still in exile, G-d listens to our childlike purity of heart and assures us that the "night of exile" is but temporary. Just like He saved us from the Pharaohs in past generations, so too will He redeem us from this present exile so that we can indeed celebrate the Seder—this year—in Jerusalem!

THE FOUR QUESTIONS REVISITED

ESSAY SIX

THE FOUR QUESTIONS REVISITED

What makes this night different from all [other] nights?

On all nights we need not dip even once, on this night we do so twice!

On all nights we eat chametz or matzah, and on this night only matzah.

On all nights we eat any kind of vegetables, and on this night maror!

On all nights we eat sitting upright or reclining, and on this night we all recline!

Why Makes This Night Different

One of the highlights of the Passover Seder is the Mah Nishtanah, The Four Questions concerning the things that are unique to the

night of Passover. These Four Questions are prefaced with a general question: "Why is this night different from all other nights."

Some commentators interpreted this introductory question as it relates to the present exile. Night is a metaphor for exile and the question therefore is: Why is this exile different from all the other preceding exiles?

The Rebbe Rashab follows that approach with one slight variation: Instead of the word Mah translated as why, he renders it more literally as "what." The question now reads: What is it that distinguishes this exile from all the others? Or "How is this exile different from all the others?"

And the Four Questions that follow are actually four answers to the question; four explanations as to what makes this exile different from all others. (See Hayom Yom for the Rebbe Rashab's novel interpretation of the four questions/answers in detail. In short, the dipping, Matzah, Maror and reclining are expressions of ultimate purity that will transform our bodies, and animal

souls, elevate us to unprecedentedly higher levels of spirituality and the experience of the essence of G-dly delight that will occasion the *Geulah* from this golus.)

The following is an attempt to adapt the Rebbe Rashab's approach to the Mah Nishtanah and apply it to the current phase of exile, which is arguably different from all preceding phases

Sandwiched

In the end of the Biblical Book of Daniel, it is stated: "Happy is the one who waits." Rashi, based on the Midrash, comments that the praise extended to the one who waits for Moshiach refers to the period when Moshiach is hidden after he had already been revealed. The scenario for Moshiach according to the Midrash is that Moshiach is first revealed (*nigleh*) and then he is concealed (*nichseh*) and then revealed again (*nigleh*), after which time he will inaugurate the final redemption. Moshiach is revealed even before the actual redemption just as Moshe was revealed as the redeemer even as Jews were still

languishing in Egypt and suffering from their enslavement.

The Rebbe stated that Moshiach has already been revealed. Subsequent to Gimmel Tammuz we thus entered into the interim period of concealment, waiting impatiently for the time Moshiach will take us out of exile.

When Rashi applies the words "happy is the one who waits" to this interim period of concealment and not to the period that precedes Moshiach's initial revelation it indicates that this period of interim concealment carries with it a unique challenge.

It may therefore be suggested—following the approach of the Rebbe Rashab—that the question *Mah Nishtanah* can be interpreted in a way that reflects the unique phase of exile in which we presently find ourselves:

> **"What is it about this phase of night/exile/concealment that is different from all other phases of exile?**

The question is important because it challenges us to look for the approach we must take in this period of exile that is commensurate with its unique status of "sandwiched" concealment.

The first response to the question is:

Double Dipping

> **"All other periods of night/exile we do not dip even once; this phase of exile we dip twice."**

The phrase "other nights" is in the plural; "this night" is obviously in the singular form. In past periods of exile there was no singular focus. There were many forms of darkness. By contrast, this post-Gimmel Tammuz-concealment phase is punctuated by its singularity. As the Rebbe told us, our task is to prepare ourselves and the entire world to welcome and internalize Moshiach. This we do by intensifying all aspects of Judaism permeated with the objective of ushering in the Redemption. After Gimmel Tammuz we are obsessed with revealing Moshiach and reuniting with our Rebbe.

We then refer to the "double-dipping" that occurs on this night of Passover. The reason for the dipping is simply to do things differently from the way we usually do them. We start off by changing the narrative so that it would arouse the curiosity of the child.

The child that we have to stimulate is the Moshiach innocence within us that is covered up. The first step—even before we cultivate the adult and mature aspect of our efforts to bring about the *Geulah* is not to lose the virtue and innocence of the child within—whom our Sages refer to as Meshichoy—even as we try to grow in our mature understanding of Moshiach and *Geulah*.

But that child-like innocence that hasn't yet been tainted by our intellectual nature may be lying dormant. We must do something drastic, unorthodox and unconventional to awaken it. We therefore do unusual things because it reveals the "differences" within us; those elements that make us different and unique; our *yechidah* (the essence and "Moshiach" of our soul) that is different and unique.

But dipping once is not enough. The Rebbe did "revolutionary" things until they became mainstream and then he "dipped" again. The Rebbe's frequent blessing was *kiflayim l'toshiyah*-double strength because Redemption is connected to the idea of repetition, as in the repetitive expression employed in reference to the first Exodus: "*pakod pokaditi*-I have indeed remembered," etc.

The message is that even after we did something unconventionally positive; once it becomes the norm, we "dip" again; we keep on beating our own record of transcendence.

The Rebbe expressed this idea when in the historic talk of the 28th of Nissan he declared that we should introduce the "light of Tohu in the vessels of Tikkun." Tohu is transcendent light. Now is not the time to be content with conventional approaches. But once they become internalized and comfortably ensconced within the vessels of Tikkun as the Rebbe demanded, we have to introduce new unfettered light until it too is internalized.

Alternatively, we might add: Dipping twice means we should first stop being fixated on the conventional Oros d'tikkun and start acting with Oros d'tohu. The second message ("dipping") is we should stop being fixated exclusively on Oros d'tohu and start working on keilim d'tikkun. In other words, we cannot just focus on what is a radical departure from what we've done before in one direction only. We must take our serene Tikkun personalities and imbue them with the fiery passion of Tohu. And when that passion begins to remove us from the reality of the world that we left behind because of our flight to the "stratosphere," we must "dip" again and plant our feet on the terra firma of Tikkun only to take off again to a yet higher place.

This is what awakens the Moshiach spark within us.

The Geulah Positioning System

Once we've successfully boarded the rocket that propels us into Tohu space and back

again to earth, we are ready to focus on the actual mission.

> **"In all other periods of Golus we eat Chometz or Matzah, in this phase of golus we eat only Matzah.."**

Matzah, Chassidic philosophy teaches us, is the symbol of Bittul, self-effacing submission to G-d and His Torah.

In other period of golus we were allowed to pursue our own metzius (subjective interests that satisfy our egos) even as we had times when we would experience the self-surrender of matzah-bittul.

A child, the Rambam says, you may bribe to get him or her to do a Mitzvah. As he or she matures, their notion of reward becomes more sophisticated, but one may still lack the ability to totally put aside one's own interests.

Today we have only *bittul*; i.e., even our ego is harnessed to bringing the *Geulah*. Every part of our personality must revolve around *Geulah*. Now the emphasis on bittul, i.e. having our eyes on the goal, is more pronounced and urgent than ever before:

In the past, when we were still on the road towards *Geulah* it was easy to get sidetracked and go off on a tangent into our own personal ambitions and goals that were not totally in consonance with our ultimate goal. And that was okay as long as we did not violate any of the teachings of the Torah.

Thus, our Sages state, the traveling disruptions are more difficult for a man than for a woman. This can be explained in a spiritual fashion. Our goal is to make the world into a dwelling place for G-d. That is what Moshiach and *Geulah* are all about. Women, who create dwelling places for G-d in their own homes, are much more "plugged in" to the goal. They do not easily stray from it. Men who do the preliminary work of paving the way might forget as to what is the ultimate objective of their work and may take a detour.

In the age of GPS's we must recognize that we too must be guided by the Geulah Positioning System and dwell on it while we are engaged in the Geulah-Pesach-Seder.

In this phase of exile, we have to be exclusively matzah; everything we do must revolve around fulfilling G-d's agenda of making the world a dwelling place for Him and not our own—even spiritual—agenda.

Crushed!

> **In all other nights/exiles we eat all types of greens, this night/phase of exile we eat Maror**

No matter how difficult golus is there are times when we can eat greens, we get satisfaction with our growth; now we are shattered because we are still in a period of concealment. As the Rebbe stated in his landmark discourse—the last one he distributed to us—this is the meaning of the Torah's requirement to crush the olives for the Menorah to elicit the source and essence of light. While in the past we focused on the manifestations of G-dly light, now we cannot tolerate anything less than the G-d's essence.

As the Rebbe explains in that discourse days before he entered into the stage of *nichseh,* never before were we as crushed as we are

today—not because of persecution and suffering—but because the ultimate goal of reaching the "fiftieth gate of understanding" still eludes us. Our feeling of being crushed is even more palpable now because we cannot hear or see the Rebbe. The concealment that comes after the initial revelation is in many ways more crushing than the concealment we experienced throughout the painful journey of exile.

Unity!

> **In all other nights/exiles we eat sitting or reclining; in this phase of exile all of us eat reclining**

Reclining is the expression of *Geulah*.

In all other periods we could compartmentalize golus and *Geulah*; now we are obsessed with *Geulah*

In addition, the idea of "we are all reclining" conveys the idea of unity of the Jewish people. In the past, unity was not as crucial. There was room for division; now we have to all be sitting at the same table and partake of

the feast associated with *Geulah*, even if we disagree about methodology.

We ought to focus, as the Rebbe told us, on the things that unite us, and not on that which divides us. And there is one thing we all agree on: That we are preparing ourselves and the entire world for the *Geulah* Shleimah.

THE FOUR ANSWERS

THE FOUR ANSWERS

How Many Questions?

One of the significant aspects of the Seder is the emphasis we place on questions; specifically, the Four Questions.

The four specific questions are introduced with a general one, the *Mah Nishtanah question*: "Why is this night different from all other nights?

The Rebbe Rashab (the 5th Lubavitcher Rebbe, whose 75th yahrtzeit occurred two weeks ago, on the 2nd of Nissan) follows a tradition of commentators who view the four questions as four answers to a single, overarching question.

The original question, the way the Rebbe Rashab interprets it, is restated as: why is this period of Galus-exile different from all preceding periods of exile?

What follows is an inquiry into a modern modification of that question and is directed

to finding a novel understanding of the four answers.

Rather than focusing on our exile in its entirety—stretching from the destruction of the Second Temple to the present—let us focus on the paradoxical period we are in right now.

The Rebbe (whose 113th birthday we celebrated this week on the 11th of Nissan) told us that we are living in Messianic times; Moshiach is already here. The feast associated with Messianic times has been set right in front of us. We have but to open our eyes and see it. All we need do is welcome Moshiach into our lives. The Rebbe pointed to 5750 and 5751 (corresponding roughly to 1990-1991) as years of miracles and great wonders. The many miracles during the Gulf War and the astonishing peaceful collapse of the former Evil Empire, the Soviet Union, pointed to our entry into a new age and invited us to savor Redemption. In the Rebbe's own words: "we have witnessed the beginning and a taste of Moshiach's effects on the world."

Concealment

However, after all of these seismic shifts in the geo-political situation and incredible miracles in Israel, we now find ourselves apparently in a lull.

To be sure, miracles have not ceased. But since the 3rd of Tammuz of the year 5794 (1994) we can no longer see and hear the Rebbe. Israel's very existence is now being called into question by its "neighbors" with more ferocity than ever before. Even friendly countries are putting extraordinary pressure on Israel to sacrifice its own security. So many tragic losses have occurred in the Jewish community and beyond; most recently, and may it be the last time such a horror assails us, the devastating loss of 7 children in a fire last week. We are forced to conclude that we are in the period the Midrash and Rashi call *nichseh*-[temporary] concealment.

The New *Mah Nishtanah*

And so the *Mah Nishtanah* question can be rephrased for this moment in time as: Why is

this period of concealment different from all other periods of exile that preceded it?

The question does not beg for a description of what is happening or why it is happening—the former is quite evident and the latter only G-d can answer. Rather, the import of the question is, how best do **we respond** to this version of night? What do we need to do differently from past efforts to bring about the Redemption? And here too, we are not looking for newfangled, heretofore unknown remedies to our Galus conditions. We just want to know which Torah approaches, within so many possible diverse and legitimate ones, should we emphasize now.

Double Dipping: Tohu and Tikkun

The first answer is:

> **"In all other nights (read: periods of Golus) we did not dip even once; this night (phase of Golus) we dip twice."**

To understand the significance of the "double dipping" we must first review the reason for

dipping at the Seder. The dipping, we are told, is to do things differently and change up the narrative. This will pique the child's curiosity and will invite more questions.

The child is the Moshiach innocence covered up within us and sandwiched in Messianic energy that we now experience in the period of *nichseh*-concealment.

We do unusual things because it reveals the "differences" within us; those elements that make us different and unique.

The Rebbe taught us to do revolutionary things until they became mainstream and then he inspired us to "dip" again.

More specifically, in his historic talk of the 28th of Nissan 5751 the Rebbe spoke of our mission: to "introduce the sublime light of the world of *Tohu* into the ample vessels of *Tikkun*." The world of *Tohu,* Kabbalah teaches us, is a spiritual realm where G-dly light is too powerful for vessels to contain it. The world of *Tikkun* is a world in which the light is sufficiently attenuated so that it can fill the vessels. Our objective, the Rebbe stated, is to introduce the powerful energy of

Tohu into the consciousness of our limited world of *Tikkun*.

This Kabbalistic formula can be restated simply as we should do revolutionarily radical things (within the context of Judaism, of course) and make them normal.

The Rebbe was preparing us for this "concealment" period, thus he emphasized the need for "double dipping."

Those whose behavior is structured and therefore limited must "dip" (a term in Hebrew which also means to nullify oneself) by breaking out of their pattern. And, conversely, those whose approach is non-conformist, zealous and revolutionary must also "dip" by transforming their approach. They must learn to allow their energy to be internalized and made acceptable to the world.

This double dipping requires that we do two things: a) change the light of *Tikkun* into the light of *Tohu,* and b) change the vessels of *Tohu* into the vessels of *Tikkun* without compromising either the energy of *Tohu* or the vessels of *Tikkun*.

No Personal Agendas

The second answer to the *Mah Nishtanah* question is:

> **"In all other nights (read: *Golus*) we eat *Chometz* and Matzah, this night (this phase of *Golus*) we eat only Matzah**

Chometz and Matzah are symbols of ego and humility, respectively. In other periods of exile we pursued a two pronged approach to fulfilling our mission. We focused on our own self-development by stroking our egos, as symbolized by *Chometz*, even as we were aware of our role as G-d's emissaries charged with bringing the world to its intended goal—the Messianic Age, when the world will be filled with G-d's presence. When we focus only on our own spiritual needs that is like eating *Chometz*, symbolizing the ego, but when we have our eyes on the greater goal, we are in a Matzah state because we have abandoned all personal agendas.

In another historic talk, the Rebbe spoke of how we concluded various missions in the

past, leaving us with a single mission: to prepare ourselves and the entire world for Moshiach. The Rebbe added that this means all of the multifarious things that we did and must continue to do, are permeated with the overarching theme of Moshiach. Now we must be only Matzah! Even our need to enhance of own spiritual lives becomes enmeshed with and subsumed in the quest to fulfill G-d's desire for a world of Redemption. We can no longer afford to be sidetracked and follow tangents into different areas that might be divorced from attaining the goal.

On a long journey, the farther we are from our destination the more freedom we have to take a detour to visit the sights on the way. However, as we approach our destination we must begin to focus exclusively on how to reach the goal.

Crushed

The third answer to the *Mah Nishtanah* question is:

> **"In all other nights (Golus) we ate all types of greens, this night (phase of Golus) we eat bitter herbs."**

In the past, no matter how difficult Golus was, there were times when we derived some satisfaction with our growth ("eat greens"); today we are shattered, wanting Redemption for the world so badly that we are crushed every day Moshiach tarries.

In the last discourse the Rebbe distributed to us (entitled "*V'Atah Tetzaveh*) he clarified how exile is more crushing today than it was even when we suffered from active persecution. Put in simple terms, the greater our expectations and the closer we get to the goal, the greater the yearning for it and the utter frustration and bitterness we experience for not having reached it yet.

Reclining and Unity

The fourth answer to the *Mah Nishtanah* question is:

> **"In all other nights (Golus) we ate sitting or reclining; this night (Golus) all of us eat reclining."**

As we know from reading the Haggadah every year, reclining is a sign of freedom and Redemption.

In all other periods we could compartmentalize our relationship with Golus and Geulah; now we must be obsessed with Geulah.

Because we were so far from realizing our most heartfelt plea - bring Moshiach now! - we had to find ways of coping with and surviving Golus. So while we set aside times and opportunities to express our desire for Redemption, we were able to focus on Golus conditions and exigencies. By contrast, in this interim concealment period of Golus "all of us recline." No matter one's level of knowledge and practice of Judaism (and we can all grow) we have to be fixated on the future Redemption. And while the third answer spoke to the bitterness we presently feel towards Golus, that bitterness must not lead us to depression, G-d forbid. Rather it

must stimulate our singular focus on the future. Sadness and depression have no room in Jewish life today and certainly not while crossing over from Golus into Geulah.

There is another crucial message in the fourth answer. Reclining together at the same Seder table also conveys the idea of Jewish unity. In the past, unity was not as crucial as it is today. Now we all need to be sitting comfortably at the same table even if we disagree about everything else related to the path to Redemption, among other issues. We must recognize that we are all brothers and sisters, sitting as a family at our Father in Heaven's table. That itself is a Moshiach phenomenon, which will hasten the full revelation of Moshiach and the true and complete Redemption. May it be **this** year in Jerusalem!

A Kosher and Happy Pesach!

REACH FOR THE HIGHEST: THE SKY IS NOT THE LIMIT

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It happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarphon were reclining [at a seder] in B'nei Berak. They were discussing the exodus from Egypt all that night, until their students came and told them: "Our Masters! The time has come for reciting the morning Shema!"

The Seder in Bnei Brak

One of the narratives in the *Haggadah* involves a group of sages who celebrated the *Seder* in Bnei Brak. Their *Seder*, the *Haggadah* recounts, lasted all night long, until their students came and reminded their teachers that "the time for reading the

morning *Shema* (the prayer "Hear O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is one."—recited by Jews twice daily) has arrived." Their intention was to get their teachers to conclude the *Seder*.

Commentators express some bewilderment at the students' intrusion in their teacher's *Seder*. Didn't the teachers themselves know the importance of reading the *Shema* in its proper time?

Furthermore, they ask, when the students arrived, the time for reading the *Shema* had just commenced. The designated time for the reading of the morning *Shema* continues for a full quarter of the day. They should have waited until it got closer to the actual deadline before rushing their teachers to conclude their *Seder*.

The Deeper Meaning of the Shema

In Chassidic tradition the meaning of reciting the *Shema* entails more than just reciting a few words, as important as they are. In fact, the *Shema* goes beyond the affirmation of our belief in one G-d.

For even the belief in one G-d assumes far greater significance in Chassidic literature. Belief in one G-d Chassidic thought explains means to believe that there is actually nothing else but G-d .

When one reflects on the dynamics of creation, that the world was created out of absolute nothingness, one reaches the conclusion that the world has no inherent life of its own. All that exists is G-d's creative force that keeps everything in existence. Were G-d to leave go, nothing could exist on its own.

Two Levels of Divine Unity

But, even this realization, can be understood on two distinct levels. The lower level is to realize that one cannot possibly exist without G-d. Even so, we do still retain a sense of identity and recognition of self. Because we do realize that nothing exists without G-d's power, we are able to surrender our ego's to G-d. To accomplish the surrender of our egos, however, one must expend much energy.

There is a higher level of Divine unity that only a select few can ever attain. This level entails not only the surrender of one's ego to G-d, but to realize that one's existence is nothing but G-d. At this level one is totally subordinated to G-d, to the extent that one "automatically" responds to G-d's will without the need for a struggle to overcome one's natural resistance.

Evening and Morning *Shema*

The two times we are to read the *Shema* parallel these two levels. The evening *Shema*, recited after dark, represents the person who is spiritually in the dark, but through mediation and reflection can achieve the lower level of unity that assists one in overcoming one's ego.

The morning *Shema*, however, represents the person for whom there is no darkness and who is therefore capable of appreciating and feeling so naturally that there is absolutely nothing else but G-d.

Touched by Their Teachers

When the sages sat down to conduct the *Seder*, they had become so inspired with G-d's miracles and His role in their lives, that some of **their** ardor began to influence their students.

Thus, the students came to their teachers and told them, "You should realize that your influence has enabled us to 'reach' (The Hebrew word "*higia*" that is rendered "arrived" can also be translated more literally as "reached" or "touched") the level of the morning *Shema*. We too now have a glimpse into this sublime spiritual world, where one basks in the knowledge of G-d's existence hat liberates them from the struggle to overcome their egos.

On the night of Passover, each and every one of us—no matter how lacking we might be in spiritual matters—is capable of "reaching" for the highest levels of spiritual experience.

Opening the Door to Moshiach

During the Seder there is a part where we open the door to the outside to indicate that we fear nothing. Furthermore, we even leave our doors unlocked so that if Elijah the prophet shall come he would find our doors open.

Perhaps, one could suggest that the opening of the door for Elijah and Moshiach is our way of saying that we are now open and receptive to the mindset of Moshiach, for the night of Passover affords us a glimpse into the world of the future, when the "entire world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the sea is covered with water."

INNOCENT BY ASSOCIATION

INNOCENT BY ASSOCIATION

Blessed is the Omnipresent One, blessed be He! Blessed is He who gave the Torah to His people Israel, blessed be He! The Torah speaks of four children: One is wise, one is wicked, one is simple and one does not know how to ask.

Who Put the Wicked Son Next to the Wise Son?

One of the main features of the *Haggadah* that we recite at the *seder* is about the Four Sons: The wise son, the wicked son, the simple son and the son who does not know how to ask questions. The *Haggadah* proceeds to detail what the father has to say to each of these sons according to their level of intelligence and capacity to absorb the message.

The author of the *Haggadah* lists the four sons in an unusual manner: The wise son, the wicked son, the simple son and the one who does not have the knowledge to ask. This order prompted the question by many a commentator, why was the wicked son placed next to the wise and presumably righteous son?

The previous Lubavitcher Rebbe answered that it is the duty of the wise son to associate himself with the wicked son and influence him to return to Judaism. By placing the wise son next to the wicked son, there is hope that something will rub off and the wicked son will ultimately change his ways.

It won't Necessarily Rub Off

This answer begs for further clarification based on a story told of a certain young man, steeped in Torah knowledge, who began to associate himself with a group of rebellious youths, whose views were quite antithetical to the views of Judaism. When his rabbi apprised him of the danger in his associating with such individuals, the young student

replied tongue in cheek: "Don't worry. Just as all of my years that I have associated with your disciples didn't rub off on me, the heretical views of these youths will also not affect me."

The rabbis replied by referring to a law mentioned in the weekly Torah portion that is usually read before Passover. When the meat of a sacrifice touches something that is ritually impure it renders the meat likewise ritually impure ((Leviticus 7:19). Mere touch has the deleterious effect on the meat and renders it contaminated and unfit. On the other hand, when something holy touches something neutral, it does not confer the holiness on it with mere touch. In order for the neutral substance to become holy, the holy substance must permeate it.

If one wants to be influenced in a positive way, one must make an attempt to imbibe, absorb and internalize the positive influence. By contrast, when one makes "casual" contact with impure influences, it can have a negative effect.

This response is, in essence, what our sages intended when they said "Distance yourself from a bad neighbor." Even if one's contact with a bad person is of a purely superficial nature—he is only my neighbor—nevertheless, one must make an attempt to distance oneself from him.

Reconciling Contagious Evil with Standing Together with Rasha

Having made the case for keeping one's distance from undesirable influences, we must now reexamine the answer of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe to the question why the Haggadah text juxtaposes the wise son with the wicked son.

The Rebbe's answer that it was intended for the wise son to influence the wicked son raises a question:

How does this reconcile with the preceding teaching that impurity can contaminate something with even the most casual forms of contact. Wouldn't it pose a serious threat to the spiritual health of the wise son to associate himself with the wicked one?

Nothing to Fear

The answer lies in a basic distinction between the two scenarios. In the latter case, where the *chocham*-the wise son associates himself with the wicked son, his intention is to influence him. In doing so, he fulfills the most basic mitzvah of "*Ahavat Yisrael*-Love for one's fellow."

By demonstrating his love and concern for his fellow Jew, he is protected from being harmed by his closeness to the wicked son. There is a Talmudic principle that those people engaged in the performance of a Mitzvah shall know no harm.

On the contrary, the love and concern is so powerful that it will ultimately move and inspire even the most wicked of sons.

We have been guaranteed by our sages that when engaged in the process of helping our fellow Jew—materially or spiritually—that we will be impervious to the dangers that are normally associated with this relationship.

Moreover, R. Schneur Zalamn of Liadi (founder of the Chabad Chassidic movement, know as "the Alter Rebbe") asserts that the

one who expresses this measure of love and concern will be refined to the extent that "his mind and heart will become one thousand times more sensitive."

Moreover, the Haggadah states that the wicked son is told that had he lived in the days of the Exodus he would not have been liberated from Egypt. Now, however, that the "wise son" has been sitting next to him and inspiring him, even he is guaranteed to be liberated from exile.

This was true in times gone by, when there were Jews who were actually characterized as "evil" and "heretics" and the like. Even they are Jews, whose soul yearns for G-d. It takes the effort of the Wise son to reveal the inner core of Jewishness in the Wicked son.

How much more so is this true nowadays, when there is virtually no such thing as a "wicked son." Our task is to mainly bring the warmth and light of Judaism to the many people who — through no fault of their own — have not received a good Jewish education, or who may not know of the beauty of Mitzvot.

No Jew will be Left Behind

This is why, the Prophets allude to the fact that no Jew will be left behind, when the Moshiach will liberate all Jews from exile.

Never before in history have we experienced such an outpouring of "Wise sons" and their desire to reach "in" to the hearts and souls of even the most assimilated Jew. And never before has the heart of even the most assimilated Jew been open to genuine Judaism presented to him or her with love.

All of these positive and loving efforts to reveal the inner spirit of every Jew will pay off very soon.

THE FOUR SONS IN ASCENDING ORDER

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Blessed is the Omnipresent One, blessed be He! Blessed is He who gave the Torah to His people Israel, blessed be He! The Torah speaks of four children: One is wise, one is wicked, one is simple and one does not know how to ask.

Conventional Wisdom

Who has not heard of the four sons (more accurately, the four children) who come to the Seder?

The first is the *chacham*, the wise son (or daughter), then the *rasha*, the wicked or rebellious child, then the *tam*, the simple child, and finally the *she'aino yo'deah lishol*, the child who does not know how to ask questions.

Conventional wisdom has it that the four sons are listed in descending order. Yet if that was the case why is the rebellious child placed immediately after the wise son? And why are the simple children placed last?

Only the *Chacham* can Influence the *Rasha*

The classic answer given by the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe is that while the rebellious child is certainly not above the simple child, he needs to be placed next to the *chacham* because only the *chacham* can influence him and bring him back into the fold.

There is another system in which the four sons are indeed listed in descending order. In this approach, the simple son and the one who does not know how to ask questions are indeed inferior to the *rasha* because their lack of knowledge derives not from their sincere simplicity but, rather, from indifference. Rebellion is preferable to indifference.

The *Chacham:* The Lowest Rung

One may suggest, incredibly, a third approach in which the four sons do indeed go in ascending order, however with the *chacham* on the lowest rung of the ladder, followed by the *rasha*. The two highest levels are occupied by the simple son and the one who does not know how to ask questions. In this system the one who cannot ask questions is on the highest rung!

This is not meant to disparage the *chacham*. It is intended to show that even with the exalted position of the *chacham* one can and must go even higher.

Let us examine the *chacham,* about what is good about him and what is lacking in his attitude.

The *chacham* is an intellectual and takes an exclusively academic approach to Passover. The *chacham* is blessed with a sharp mind and healthy intellectual curiosity. He or she is obsessed with a thirst for knowledge. "Tell me everything" he demands. "I want to know it all."

And we respond in kind. We tell him all of the laws and even the finest nuances of the laws. We withhold nothing from the studious and inquisitive child. We don't push him off by saying, "When you get older you will understand." To quote the Talmud in the context of educating your child with Jewish knowledge, "stuff him like an ox!"

But, surprisingly, as great as this thirst for knowledge is, it is just the first rung of the ladder. It is but the first step to escaping from bondage. Intellectual and academic achievement, in and of itself, is far from the goal, though it makes for a good beginning. This must be followed with step number two, the rebellious son.

Potential Energy

To be sure, we are not lauding the rebellious son for his antagonistic attitude towards Passover and Judaism. We are acknowledging, approvingly, his energy with which he fights and resists. It is a sign that he or she is not detached from Judaism. He or she is struggling with it and is currently in the

mode of opposing it. It is also a sign that he or she possesses incredible spiritual energy that when harnessed for the good instead of rebellion will make him or her far superior to the *chacham*. In the words of the Talmud and of Maimonides, "the place where *Ba'al Teshuvah,* the returnee to G-d and Torah stands, even a completely righteous person cannot stand."

Even before he or she returns to Judaism, we must look deeper into his soul to see how his or her negative energy is actually potential superior spiritual energy. In that respect, the *rasha* is superior to the *chacham*.

Our response is to use harsh language to break the rebellious crust, as a way of revealing his or her true connection to G-d, a connection far superior to that of the *chacham.*

Being Whole

On a still higher rung is the simple son. This is the child (or the adult who attains this superior juvenile level) who is endowed with a simple but pure soul. These are the people

who simply want to do G-d's bidding and do it with sincerity and love. This approach is quite unlike the *chacham* whose question is dispassionate and academically inclined. There is no warmth and love, just intellectual curiosity, which can be very cold and detached. The *chacham* with all of his accomplishments is still very far from being whole. He lacks spirit and soul.

The simple child, by contrast, is warm to Judaism and his question is motivated by a sincere desire to be part of the experience, not just to understand it theoretically. The word "simple" that is employed here is *tam*, which also means sincere and whole. What he lacks in brain power he makes up a hundred fold in soul power.

Our response to the *tam* is not an extensive and intricate exposition of all the laws of Passover, but, instead, a simple penetrating and poignant description of what happened to us. G-d with His mighty hand took us out of Egypt, we tell him or her. These few words suffice to ignite his spark and bring excitement to his soul.

Transcending

But the highest place is reserved for the child who does not ask questions because he is so unified with the Seder and all that it represents that he transcends the need to ask. He is not ignorant or rebellious. But his attachment to the Passover experience transcends knowledge. He or she is a person for whom Judaism is his or her most essential identity.

To be sure, this lofty soul who transcends knowledge **does** engage in study and has an interest in learning. It is just that his or her connection to Judaism does not hinge on nor is limited to understanding it, just like our love for our children is not limited to our understanding of their qualities.

All in One

In truth, these four children are not mutually exclusive personalities. The true *chacham* does not stay in one place. After or while satisfying his curiosity, he starts to rebel, not against the Passover experience itself but against the coldness with which he

approaches it. He rebels against the stiffness of the intellectual and academic approach and so seeks to acquire more passion.

The *Chacham* realizes that he will be more whole if he acquires the sincere simplicity and humility of the *tam,* and he aspires to that level. But it doesn't come easy. The ego that has just been fed and stoked by his ability to quench his thirst for and accumulation of knowledge feels content where it is. One needs to rebel against one's own complacency to reach the level of the *tam*.

But the *tam* whose soul is passionate is not satisfied with his or her level of attachment. The *tam* seeks to transcend himself and to reach the level where his or her attachment to G-d, Torah, and the Passover experience of spiritual freedom becomes an inseparable part of his or her personality.

The Four Sons of the Future

The Passover experience—more than any other—is the paradigm for the final Redemption.

The Talmud states that Moshiach comes when we are distracted from his coming. At face value this flies in the face of numerous exhortations of our sages, including our daily prayers in which we are told to anticipate his coming every day. How do we reconcile these two statements?

The Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (the founder of Chabad known as the Alter Rebbe) in his classic Tanya explains that it does not mean that we should, G-d forbid, distract ourselves from Moshiach. Rather it means that our connection to Moshiach should transcend logic.

In truth, the goal of Moshiach is to become *all* four of the sons.

In the Messianic Age we will all be imbued with all of the knowledge that eludes us today. We will all reach the ultimate level of *chacham*.

In the Messianic Age even the *tzadik*, the completely righteous individual, will experience the heightened level of the *Ba'al Teshuvah*, the one who rebelled and

transferred his passion into the realm of holiness.

In the Messianic Age, we will all realize sincere wholeness that today is expressed in the simple Jew who serves G-d with sincerity. This simplicity is an expression and manifestation of the "simplicity" of G-d, in the sense that G-d is beyond description and definition. He is utterly simple and the simple Jew captures this Divine simplicity as the Ba'al Shem Tov taught us.

Only in the Messianic Age will we all be conduits of that "beyond-description" aspect of G-d that will endow us with Divine simplicity.

And, finally, in the Messianic Age we will all reach the level where we will have no need to ask questions because we will have become one with G-d and His Torah.

IT'S A COMMAND!

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The wise one, what does he say? "What are the testimonies, the statutes and the laws which the L-rd, our G-d, has commanded you?" You, in turn, shall instruct him in the laws of Passover, [up to] `one is not to eat any dessert after the Passover-lamb.'

The wicked one, what does he say? "What is this service to you?!" He says `to you,' but not to him! By thus excluding himself from the community he has denied that which is fundamental. You, therefore, blunt his teeth and say to him: "It is because of this that the L-rd did for me when I left Egypt"; `for me' - but not for him! If he had been there, he would not have been redeemed!"

The simpleton, what does he say? "What is this?" Thus you shall say to him: "With a strong hand the L-rd took us out of Egypt, from the house of slaves."

As for the one who does not know how to ask, you must initiate him, as it is said: "You shall tell your child on that day, 'It is because of this that the L-rd did for me when I left Egypt.'"

What's the Difference?

In the *Haggadah* that we recite at the *Seder*, several references are made about the need for us to be commanded. For example: The wise son asks, "What are these testimonies, statutes and judgments that G-d our G-d has **commanded** you?"

What precisely is the wise son's question? And how does it differ from a similar question that is raised by the wicked son—"What is this service that you are doing?" Both question the need for observing the rituals of the seder. Yet one's question is characterized as a question of a "Wise son," while the other is described as a wicked son's question!

Second, the Haggadah states that the wicked son uses the exclusionary term "you," implying that he is not a part of the Seder.

Yet, amazingly, the wise son also uses a similar term when he asks "What are these testimonies, statutes and judgments that G-d our G-d has commanded **you**?" He doesn't say "us", but "you." Why then is he called a wise son and the other one a wicked son?

The Answer is in the Parsha

The key to answering this question can be found in the name of the Torah portion that usually coincides with the Festival of Passover. Passover usually occurs in the week following the reading of the weekly parsha entitled *Tzav,* which means command.

According to the seventeenth century Halachic and mystical authority, the *Shelah,* there is always a connection that can be found between a Torah reading and the holiday that is nearby. What is the connection between the *parsha, Tzav* and the Festival of Liberation, Passover?

One can find a connection in the very name of the Parsha—*Tzav,* which means command that will also shed light on the wise son's question.

The wise son is addressing his parents, teachers and elders. He is in awe of their devotion to G-d and the joy and enthusiasm for celebrating the exodus from Egypt. "Why then," he asks, "do **you** have to be **commanded** to do all this. Perhaps, I, who am not so inspired and spiritually attuned, need to be prodded into action by way of a command, but **you**, the spiritual elite, do you also have to be commanded?!"

Open the Package

The *Haggadah*'s answer is cryptic. It reads, "And you too tell him the laws of Passover; one should not eat a desert after the Paschal offering." How do these words respond to the wise son's question as to why they need a command?

The answer is that **everybody** needs the command because a Judaism that comes **exclusively** from one's emotions, as beautiful and meaningful as that may be, will be missing some key elements of the observance.

Every Mitzvah contains within it revealed and obvious meaning. But, a Mitzvah is also

replete with hidden and unfathomable levels of meaning. When one views Passover as only a cultural or even spiritual experience, they are able to capture much of the overt significance of the observance.

But, as with the proverbial iceberg, most of the Mitzvah's power is **beneath** the surface. It can almost be compared to one who receives a package that is wrapped with beautiful wrapping paper and revels in the wrapping, neglecting to open up the package to find and enjoy its real content.

This explains an earlier quote of the Haggadah: "Even if we are all wise, understanding...we have a Mitzvah-commandment to recount the story of the exodus." No matter how brilliant and spiritually sophisticated we are about the exodus and Passover, there is infinitely more there that can only be accessed when we view the Holiday rituals as an expression of a Divine command.

We All Need the Command

Thus the *Haggadah* states, "And you too say to him the laws of Passover," implying that you too need the **laws** of Passover, the commandments. Because each law is also a pathway (Halacha can be translated both as law and pathway) to plumbing the depths and embracing the totality of Passover.

When one, in addition to the emotional and spiritual excitement, recognizes that there is a hidden and elusive dimension to the Seder it enhances one's taste for it as well. Thus the Haggadah continues: "One must not eat desert after the Paschal lamb." The reason is to keep the taste of the Paschal lamb in one's mouth.

The message is clear. When one's approach to Judaism is based only on savoring the good taste "the desert" they can lose the most essential ingredient the "Pass-over-transcendent-mystique" of the Holiday. However, when one appreciates the nature of the commandment—the transcendent aspect of Passover—that itself becomes the desert, whose taste will linger on—as well.

No Generation Gap

Moreover, only the approach that appreciates the "command" aspect of the Mitzvah—that recognizes the infinite and transcendent nature of the Mitzvah—will carry on to the next generation.

When one's Judaism is emotional and intellectual based, the next generation might have a different set of emotional needs and develop a different mindset, which doesn't make room for Passover. Only when there is the element of *Tzav*-command does it proceed seamlessly to the next generation. The command serves as the bridge over the generation gap.

True Freedom and the Ultimate Bridge

The need for the command aspect of a Mitzvah is even more pronounced with regard to Passover, the "season of our Liberation." In order to experience true freedom we have to be able to free ourselves from the shackles of our own internal exile.

Slavery is not just subservience to the will of some tyrant or slave owner. One can be a slave to one's own emotions, passions and entrenched ideas. To be free one must be able to get out of internal imprisonment.

Moreover, the definition of freedom is when there are no constraints to our innermost desires. Since our soul is what defines our innermost being, when we do a Mitzvah and submit to G-d's command and become G-d's servants, we are in total compliance with our soul's will. There can be nothing more liberating than doing a Mitzvah because it is G-d's command.

The is what enables us to experience the full sense of freedom that Passover is the means through which we will go out of our present exile and experience true Redemption. Just as the command serves as the only sturdy bridge between the generations, so too, the command approach to Judaism will be the ultimate bridge between the end of the period of exile that we are in and the beginning of the period of Redemption that we are about to enter into, imminently.

THE SIXTEEN SONS?

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The simpleton, what does he say? "What is this?" Thus you shall say to him: "With a strong hand the L-rd took us out of Egypt, from the house of slaves."

We are All Four Sons

One of the most interesting features of the Haggadah we recite Passover night at the Seder is the section concerning the Four Sons: the *chochom*-wise; *rasha*-wicked or rebellious; *tam*-simple; and the *she'aino yodai'ah lishol*-does not know how to ask.

The truth is that each one of us possesses elements of all four sons. There are times when we act wisely and there are times when we exhibit a rebellious streak. There is also a hint of simplicity even in the most scholarly and intelligent individual and there are times when we are clueless, befuddled or lose interest to the point of indifference.

The Four Dimensions of the Wise Son

One can go a step further. It may be proposed that each one of these four sons (and daughters as well; the word son is used generically here to mean child) possesses elements of the other three personality types.

Let's start with the *chochom*:

The *chochom* within the *chochom* is one whose faculty of *chochma* dominates his personality.

The attribute of *chochma* is associated with *bittul*-self-abnegation. He is in touch with *chochma* the highest, most subtle and receptive faculty to the Divine soul.

This heightened receptivity to G-d possessed by the ultimate *chochom* inspires complete submission to G-d's will. He does not see the need to understand G-d's commandments.

When he asks "what are all the testimonies, statutes and judgments that G-d commanded you" he is questioning why there are divisions amongst the various commandments. Some are rational, others are not. For the *chochom* there is no need to discover a rational basis for any of the commandments since they are all, by definition, divine supra-rational commands to which one must submit; like them, understand them, or not.

His argument and challenge to us is: why philosophize about the Mitzvos; just do them!

The rebellious *rasha* within our *chochom* is one whose passion for the Divine is unrestrained. As a result, he cannot fathom either the need for a physical world or our concomitant obsession with physical expressions of service to G-d.

Since he is a genuine *chochom* he observes all of the commandments to their minutest details. He is repelled by the way other people get carried away with ceremonies and rituals. Precisely because he is a *chochom*, in touch with the higher spiritual realms, he does not feel comfortable in the physical domain. He is passionate about his Judaism but he thrives on the passion rather than on the doing.

The simple *tam* within the *chochom* is in touch with his childish innocence. He doesn't believe in asking questions and he has no need or desire to understand. He just wants to know what do to. This is not because he is "simple." No, he is truly a *chochom* but he also values the state of simple faith and devotion to G-d. As the famous medieval sage known as the Rivash said, "I pray like a child," meaning that he eschewed the deep

meditations of the Kabbalists. This *chochom*'s unsullied personality necessitates the simplest response.

The unknowing *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* within the *chochom* reaches even more deeply into his soul's innermost layer, which transcends knowledge. He neither rejects knowledge (since he is a *chochom*) nor is he oblivious to it (as is the *tam*), but rather he reaches beyond it. He masters, incorporates and integrates all the levels of knowledge and then recognizes that the commandments transcend all of these explanations.

It may be suggested that this *chochom* allows his transcendent level to influence and find expression within his wisdom.

The Four Dimension of the Rebellious Son

Likewise there are four dimensions within the *rasha*:

The *chochom* within the *rasha* is the rebellious person who uses his brilliant mind to find ways of getting around the law. The Talmud speaks of a scholar who can find 150

rational reasons to justify something that is unmistakably wrong. Without his *chochma* he could never get away with all of his rebellious acts.

The *rasha* within the *rasha* is one who sins just to show his utter contempt for the Torah. Whereas the first category of *rasha* may transgress for the sheer pleasure of it, the *rasha* within the *rasha* does so out of spite and unmitigated evil. The Biblical monarch Nimrod was described in rabbinic literature as "he knows his master and intends to rebel against him." The same epithet was applied to the wicked nation Amalek.

The *tam* within the *rasha* uses guile and deception to advance his nefarious goals by feigning innocence and righteousness. Our Sages point to Esau as an example of one who asks pious sounding questions to cover up his true agenda. This is the hypocrite who feigns piety and integrity so that he can con people. The *rasha-tam* puts a face of innocence on the pursuit of his evil ways.

The *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* within the *rasha* is arguably the lowest level of *rasha* because he has lost his conscience. The three preceding dimensions of the *rasha* may know that what they are doing is wrong. They might even have a guilty conscience and exhibit some degree of remorse for their evil. But this last element of the *rasha* is the innermost sociopath who feels nothing. He has transgressed so many times that he is finally devoid of every ounce of sensitivity.

The Four Dimensions of the Simple Son

The *chochom* within the category of the *tam* is the simple son who may also be a brilliant scholar. This is a tragic modern phenomenon. One can be a brilliant scientist, philosopher, physician and lawyer etc., but lack even the most rudimentary knowledge of Judaism. In a way, he is worse than someone who is illiterate. The illiterate person at least knows that he is limited and will accept what others teach. The oxymoronic "knowledgeable ignoramus" however thinks he knows and understands everything and is qualified to

make statements about G-d, religion and Judaism without the slightest understanding of these subjects.

The *rasha* within the *tam* is the uncouth and ignorant person, devoid of any substance; he is like an animal that will trample anything in its path. While the generic *rasha* will consciously trample everything holy, the *rasha/tam* combination does the same because he doesn't have the maturity and sophistication to know that there is something wrong with his action.

The *tam* within the *tam* is the truly simple person who doesn't trample anyone or anything. He just never had the opportunity nor does he possess the requisite intelligence to know what is right and what is wrong.

This is the traditional Talmudic era *am ha'aretz*, who is ignorant and earthy. The Talmud records the way the typical *am ha'aretz* despised his scholarly brethren. The great sage Rabbi Akiva, who began life as an *am ha'aretz,* recounted the days when he had nothing but contempt for the elite class of scholars. The *tam* can and does resist the

message of Judaism because he legitimizes, institutionalizes and even places ignorance on a pedestal.

The *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* within the *tam's* simplicity is natural and pure. Its simplicity may be a product of a failed education and or limited intelligence. Ironically, this individual is so pure, innocent and honest that he is the most receptive to our message to him. This is the simple Jew of whom the Ba'al Shem Tov spoke when he extolled their virtue as going way beyond that of the scholar.

According to the Ba'al Shem Tov, the simplicity of the simple Jew mirrors G-d's utter "simplicity; i.e., G-d's essence which defies categorization or description.

The Four Dimensions of the One Who Cannot Even Ask

The *chochom* within the *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* deliberately refrains from asking questions. He does not want anyone to realize that he does not have an answer, which would damage both his reputation and

self-image as a *chochom*. In truth, he is not a *chochom*, he is really a *she'aino yodai'ah lishol*. He knows exactly how to avoid being challenged and for that he needs to use wisdom.

Alternatively, he is the one who thinks he knows it all and therefore does not need to research or question anything. The true *chochom* is always asking questions because he understands that he does not know. The *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* is not aware that he does not know, and lacks even the modicum of knowledge necessary to ask questions.

The *rasha* within the *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* knows his own ignorance. He grasps that if he asked questions he would learn what he needs to know. In that case, he would be able to put that knowledge into practice. However, the *rasha* remains willfully ignorant. Ignorant people cannot be faulted for non-observance but they can and should be faulted for not trying to become knowledgeable. Militant ignorance is a subversive form of rebellion.

The *tam* within the *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* is endowed initially with intelligence but because he refuses to ask questions—out of fear of embarrassment—he eventually loses it. He degenerates from *chochom* to *tam*.

The *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* within the *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* is the ultimate ignoramus who tragically lacks the intelligence to ask questions. He is not wired to think critically.

All Welcome at the Seder

Each and every one of these 16 personality types is both welcome and present at the *seder* table. No matter which level one is at, when Moshiach takes us out of exile no Jew will be left behind. From the ultimate *chochom* to the ultimate *she'aino yodai'ah lishol* and everyone between, we will all be liberated from this exile. We will also be joined there by the proverbial fifth son, the one who does not even show up for the Seder.

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

WINDOWS 2448-5776

WINDOWS 2448-5776

Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaryah said: "I am like a man of seventy years old, yet I did not succeed in proving that the exodus from Egypt must be mentioned at night-until Ben Zoma explained it: "It is said, 'That you may remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your life;' now 'the days of your life' refers to the days, [and the additional word] 'all' indicates the inclusion of the nights!"

The sages, however, said: "'The days of your life' refers to the present-day world; and 'all' indicates the inclusion of the days of Moshiach."

Why Remember the Exodus Every Day and Night?

In this piece, we are informed that there is actually an obligation to remember the

Exodus from Egypt each and every day, not just at the Seder on Passover night.

Furthermore, according to Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah and Ben Zoma the obligation is to remember the Exodus each and every night as well.

We must try to understand why we are obligated to remember the Exodus from Egypt each and every day and night. Why doesn't it suffice to remember the Exodus on the anniversary of their departure from Egypt, at the Passover Seder?

Free Elections Not Freedom

To understand the importance of continually remembering the Exodus we must reflect on the blessing of freedom that we enjoy by first clearing up some misconception many have about freedom, and the institution of democracy that is a vehicle for and expression of that freedom.

First, the idea that a free election represents an inherent and automatic improvement over no election is facile and dangerous. Is there

anything positive about having the ability to freely vote for either a Hitler or a Stalin? If a system is based on evil ideas, giving us a choice to elect one tyrant and evil system or the other is not much of a choice.

For democracy to work, all candidates and parties they represent must believe in and stand for the values that make the difference between a righteous and evil society. Judaism has established the criteria for a righteous society; one that is based on the Seven Noahide commandments that were initially given to Noah after the flood, and reiterated by G-d at Mount Sinai. These seven commandments are: Negation of: idolatry, blaspheme, theft, murder, sexual crimes, mistreating animals, and establishing a judiciary that will preserve these laws and guarantee the civility pf society.

Freedom: A Means Not an End

But even a totally free society that is governed by basically decent people is not a panacea. Freedom has been erroneously depicted by many as an end and not just a

means to an end. Being free from tyranny is a great blessing, but only because it provides us with the means to realize our G-d given potential. If freedom would cause us to forget who we are and what our purpose is as Jews, then freedom would be no better than tyranny, except for the fact that with freedom, the opportunity to get back on track is always there.

The model of true freedom is the Exodus from Egypt. They were not liberated to be free. They were liberated to become a nation that would stand at Mount Sinai and receive G-d's constitution—the Torah with all of its commandments.

We can now understand why we are obligated to remember the Exodus from Egypt each and every day. It behooves us to constantly reflect on the true nature of freedom, so that freedom does not degenerate into license. If we were to forget what true freedom is for even one day, freedom can become curse rather than a blessing.

Why Every Night?

The question, however, can still be asked, why are we also obligated to remember the Exodus each and every night? Why wouldn't it suffice for us to mention it once every twenty-four hours?

The answer lies in the deeper meaning of bondage and liberation.

One could be totally free to live and behave the way one wishes to live and behave. Yet their soul can still be in an internal exile. And this internal exile can take two forms: night and day.

Night symbolizes a time when there is no light in our lives; we feel darkness and loneliness. We feel distant from G-d and our people. It may be in middle of the day, but our soul experiences night and darkness. This feeling occurs when we don't see or feel the light of the soul, because we have failed to open up windows that would allow the sunshine to enter our consciousness.

Three Ways to Open a Window

These windows can be opened three ways: by prayer, Torah study and the performance of the Mitzvot. In each of these spiritual exercises our Talmudic sages, and particularly our Chassidic sages, have emphasized the need for *kavvanah*, which may be translated "intent" or "concentration," but also as "windows."

Remembering the Exodus every night is the impetus to do all that we have to do to open these windows for our soul. In the Shema, the themes of performing all the Mitzvot and the remembrance of the Exodus are inextricably bound.

To be sure, even the most perfunctory manner in which we do G-dly acts, enables the light of the soul to radiate. But when we combine the performance of a G-dly act—which possesses objective liberating energies—with the subjective liberating element of *kavvanah*, i.e. focus, feeling and fervor, we then possess a guaranteed mechanism to experience the Exodus of our soul, even in a time of night.

Why Mention the Exodus When it is Light?

Now the question reverses itself. Why must we also mention the Exodus in the daytime?

Day and light implies that the soul is shining brightly. There are no impediments to our soul's ability to express itself. And yet, we can still be in internal exile.

This can be understood on two intertwined levels.

It has been explained on numerous occasions that the word Egypt in Hebrew, *Mitzraim*, derives from a root word that means constraints or limits. No matter how much light we allow our soul to freely generate, there is always a need to "break out of the boundaries" that put limits on our spiritual life. One can be the most spiritually charged person, but he or she too must continually reexamine their status, and seek to go beyond the constraining parameters of their lives.

In addition, even when a person has freed himself or herself from the shackles of night, it is crucial that they go beyond themselves by reaching out to others. If we are naturally closest to ourselves, going out of Egypt-

Mitzraim implies going out of ourselves; going beyond our own self-interests, even if they are totally spiritual and G-d oriented. The "day-personality" who feels content with his or her own spiritual accomplishments is usually someone who is still deep in bondage from which he or she must be liberated; hence, the need to mention the Exodus each and every night and day.

All of our prayers are directed to G-d to take us out of our personal exiles as well as bring us Moshiach who will take us out of the general and universal exile the entire Jewish nation, and indeed the entire world, is in. By working at liberating ourselves from our internal exile—both the night and day forms of it—we create the force that will precipitate the imminent arrival of Moshiach and the complete and final Redemption.

EXODUS OR NAMES?

EXODUS OR NAMES?

"And he became there a nation" this teaches that Israel was distinctive there.

Maintaining a Name: the Force against Assimilation

Our Sages inform us that notwithstanding the forces of assimilation in Egypt, the Jews did not change their names. No matter how far a Jew might have strayed from his/her Jewishness in Egypt, they never lost their Jewish identity.

This is what the Haggadah means when it says that "Israel was **distinctive** there." They were distinctive because they did not change their names.

It was this tenacious attachment to their identities that enabled the Jews to leave Egypt and receive the Torah at Sinai. While it was regrettable that they did not translate the realization of who they were into what

they did, they still retained this one formidable redeeming quality; they never lost sight of who they were.

This is indeed the secret of Jewish survival throughout all of our history.

To be sure, Judaism is more than just retaining our identity and name. However, it is clear that whatever else Judaism comprises, it could not survive without that identity.

It may be likened to the construction of a building that has many stories. Without its foundation, it cannot last; the building will ultimately topple. And while it is self-understood that a foundation alone does not suffice, it is nevertheless the first and most solid part of the structure.

Similarly, retaining one's name or identity is the foundation and bedrock of Jewish existence, without which there cannot be a Jewish structure.

Why the Name Names?

With this introduction we can now resolve a question posed by many a commentator as to

the name of the second of the Five Books of Moses—*Shemot*-Names.

Ostensibly, the reason for this title is the fact that this Biblical book begins with the verse: "And these are the **names** of the Children of Israel who have come to the land of Egypt..." It is common for a book or chapter to be named after its first, or one of its first, words.

The question begs to be asked:

Why would we name a book, containing some of the most central themes and historical events of Judaism such as the Exodus, the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the building of the *Mishkan* (Portable Sanctuary in the desert) etc., "names?"

Certainly, the fact that the word "*Shemot*" appears at the beginning of the book is not an adequate reason for its selection as the name of the book. Shouldn't the name capture the most riveting and poignant aspects of the book, rather than be just one of its first words?

In light of the above analysis however it is clear that without the retention of their

names and identities there would be no room for their redemption.

Thus, the second book of the Torah, known as Exodus, that details the very foundations of the Jewish nation, is appropriately called "*Shemot*-Names," because it is this stubborn attachment to one's Jewish identity—no matter what—that is the basis for everything else discussed in this book, particularly the central them of the Exodus.

The Key to Liberation: Acceptance of Torah and Building a Sanctuary

The book of Exodus, or *Shemot* revolves around three central themes: The Exodus, the revelation of G-d at Mount Sinai and the construction of the *Mishkan*, the portable Sanctuary. And the role of a name and Jewish identity played a crucial role in all these three areas.

One cannot be liberated from bondage, without a sense of self-hood. By definition, a person who is not secure with his/her own identity is susceptible to virtually every other

influence that imposes itself on the individual. This is not true freedom.

One cannot surrender oneself to G-d's authority and accept the Torah at Sinai, without having an identity to surrender. Bereft of an identity, one will acquire everyone else's identity. And, these multiple identities are antithetical to accepting G-d's desired way of life, which is based on unity.

One cannot create a Mishkan, a sanctuary, for G-d without or within, when one is devoid of an identity. Dwelling implies the process of being internalized within someone. One who possesses no selfhood cannot be a vessel to receive and absorb the Divine presence. (This does not contradict the well-known Chassidic teaching that to be a Sanctuary to G-d one must be humble. There is an obvious difference between an empty–and therefore a receptive vessel–and no vessel at all.)

Hence, all of the central themes of the Book of Exodus hinge on *Shemot*, the names of the Jewish People; of never losing one's Jewish identity. The key to Exodus—and all the

themes that are associated with the Exodus, such as the Revelation at Sinai, building of the Mishkan etc.—is for us to retain our essential identities.

History Repeats Itself

What was true then, when we were liberated from the first exile, is equally true today as we await the final Redemption by Moshiach. The key to Redemption is *Shemot,* never losing sight of our names and our essential identities. We will leave, however, the deeper explanation for the power of a name to bring about liberation and Redemption for the next essay.

DON'T FORGET YOUR NAME

DON'T FORGET YOUR NAME

"And he became there a nation" this teaches that Israel was distinctive there.

In the Merit of not Changing their Names

Our Sages tell us that at the time of the Exodus, the Jewish nation had degenerated to the lowest level of depravity, much like their Egyptian tormentors. What merit did they have that made them worthy of being liberated? The Midrash states that there were three redeeming features: They did not change their language, their mode of dress and their names.

The question can be asked what was so special about the Jewish people not changing their names. Why is that considered a virtue? The part about not changing their dress

makes sense; one's dress is a reflection of their modesty and dignity. A window to one's personality is the manner of speech they use. People who use vulgar language are obviously expressing some inner vulgarity as well. But what is the virtue in preserving their names?

On the surface, the fact that they did not change their names was an indication that they did not wish to assimilate. But, if the Jews—as our sages put it—descended into the "forty-nine gates of impurity," of what value was the apparently superficial gesture of not changing a name?

A Name: Beyond the Utilitarian

What is a name? Is there any significance to a name beyond its utilitarian function, which is to identify people and objects? Obviously, if people and things did not have names, chaos and confusion would prevail. When G-d wanted to confound the people who built the tower of Babel, our sages tell us, he caused them to misidentify the names of objects. When one would ask for a hammer, for example, his co-worker would send him a

brick. In return, the brick would be thrown right back at the one who sent it originally.

But the significance of names goes beyond its practical value. When G-d created Adam he brought all of the earth's creatures before him, so that Adam can name them. Our sages point out that G-d used Adam's ability to name all the world's creatures as proof that he was more intelligent than the heavenly angels.

Jewish mystical thought explains that a Hebrew name is more than just a convention. It is the representation of the Divine force that gives life to the person or object. Adam's wisdom was that he was able to see the Divine energy contained within each of the world's creatures.

Salvageable

With this introduction, we will gain be able to understand the reason why not changing their names was considered a virtue, for which they deserved to be liberated, in spite of their lowly status.

By not changing their names they were acknowledging that they possessed a Divine energy that accorded them a distinct role within the scheme of creation. They were not just nationalists who craved an independent identity that would parallel Egyptian culture. They realized that they possessed a unique spiritual potential. They wanted to be free, so that they could actualize this spiritual potential.

When a person or a nation degenerates, but, nevertheless remembers their G-dly essence and are aware of their unique role in G-d's plan, there is much to salvage. There is hope.

The Book of Names

We can now also gain some appreciation for the otherwise bland title Jewish tradition has accorded this most exciting and colorful book best known to us, and in the non-Jewish world, as the Book of Exodus. In Hebrew it is simply the Book of *Shemot*, or the Book of Names.

As discussed in the preceding essay, this book of Exodus, features three major

historical and spiritual events, the Exodus of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, the giving of the Torah at Sinai and the construction of the *Miishkan*, the temporary Sanctuary G-d chose in the desert. What do names have to do with these pivotal events?

If the Book of Exodus is about the liberation of the Jewish people from Egypt, their entering into the covenant with G-d at Sinai and G-d's choice to dwell among them in the *Mishkan*, the driving force behind all these events was the ability of the Jews to recognize their G-d given energies, represented by their names. Hence the title of this book is *Shemot*-names.

While "Exodus" might sound more impressive as a title for this book, the word "*Shemot*-names" actually represents the soul of the entire Book of Exodus. All of the themes of this book, from the actual Exodus through the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai to the construction of G-d's Sanctuary, would be meaningless without the acknowledgment of the soul that pervaded the Jewish people, the Torah and the Sanctuary. Furthermore, because the Jewish people did not lose touch

with their essence they were worthy recipients of the Torah and of G-d's desire to dwell in their midst.

Names: The Key to the Future Redemption

In addition to the obvious lesson, about the importance of retaining and using our Jewish names, there is another deeper message we are to gather from the title *Shemot* given to the book whose central theme is the Exodus.

We are living in times that parallel the era of the Exodus from Egypt. We are standing on the threshold of the future Redemption. What is the power that we must access and manifest in these crucial times to make us worthy and ready for the contemporary process of liberation from exile?

The answer once again lies in the deeper significance of names. We must open our eyes to see beyond the exterior. We must learn to see the inner nature of everything that exists, because one of the defining characteristics of the Messianic Age will be its capacity to reveal, that which is hidden. The secrets of the Torah will be divulged.

The secrets of nature will also become manifest. The secret recesses of our souls will similarly be revealed.

As a preparation for the Age of Redemption, when all the secrets will be revealed, we must now learn to penetrate beneath the surface of our beings and recognize the inner dimension of all of existence as well.

When we look at another person we should see beyond the facade; see the person's soul and inner beauty. Don't judge the other based on what you see. Delve more deeply to find their true inner self.

When we look at an event—happy or otherwise—we should attempt to see it from within, as the unfolding of G-d's plan, rather than some arbitrary occurrence.

This, in essence, is what *Geulah* or Redemption is all about; liberating everything from the covers that prevent us from realizing its true inner nature.

We should look for the name, the Divine identity of everything in our world.

WORKAHOLICS AND EGYPTIAN BONDAGE

WORKAHOLICS AND EGYPTIAN BONDAGE

"And they put hard work upon us," as it is said: "The Egyptians made the children of Israel work with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard work, with mortar and with bricks and all manner of service in the field, all their work which they made them work with rigor." And we cried out to the L-rd, the G-d of our fathers, and the L-rd heard our voice and saw our suffering, our labor and our oppression.

Defining the Avodat-*Perech* form of Slavery

The *Haggadah* we recite at the *seder* Passover night describes the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt. Not only did the Egyptians take away their freedom by forcing them to work for them, but they also subjected them to an unusually cruel type of

work: *avodas perech,* usually rendered as "back-breaking labor."

What precisely is meant by this "back-breaking labor-*avodas perech*?"

According to *Rambam* (Maimonides) it is a reference to work, which has no limit and produces no benefit. In other words, the work itself did not have to be physically strenuous for it to qualify for torture, The fact that their work had no limit and produced no benefit was psychological torture intended to, figuratively, "break the backs" and the resolve and dignity of the Jewish slaves in Egypt.

We are required to remember the Exodus from Egypt daily, because we are, figuratively speaking, still very much subjected to Egyptian slavery, even as we enjoy unprecedented freedom. Accordingly, it is important for us to understand the dynamics of *avodas perech* in our lives, so that we can also discover the mechanism to liberate ourselves from it.

At first glance, the imperative to apply the Egyptian experience to our lives appears rather strange. Most of us, who grew up in America, probably cannot fathom what relevance this aspect of the Exodus has to our lives in this modern world. Thank G-d, we never experienced losing our freedom and independence in this good and free America and other Western Democracies. We certainly cannot relate to the idea of *avodas perech*- form of slave labor. Or could we?

Workaholics

People who are so dedicated to his/her profession or business that they have no sense of time, to the point that they neglect their families, their religious and Jewish educational responsibilities—what we would call a workaholic— are very much in an "Egyptian bondage" situation. This obsession with work parallels Maimonides' idea of *avodas perech* as work that has no limit.

Furthermore, the benefits we do enjoy from our work can only be real if our labor serves

as the "vessel" or instrument for G-d's blessing. For, after all, it is not our work itself that brings benefit, but G-d's blessing

Our efforts are the G-d-given instruments through which we channel His blessings. If, however, the instrument is misshapen it cannot elicit or transmit (all, or even part) of G-d's blessings. And while it may seem that the workaholic or the person obsessed with work will generate much profit, the person could really never truly enjoy those gains. No matter how much one makes, they still feel the need to make more.

In modern parlance we refer to this syndrome as the rat race, in Biblical jargon this type of work is the modern day equivalent of *avodas perech*. The work is endless and the benefits elusive.

The Antidote: Healthy *Avodas Perech*

Good and evil possess parallel systems. To know how to cure our enslavement to our work, we must find and unleash its positive

counterpart, the "kosher" form of *avodat perech*.

When the soul of the individual devotes itself to its service of G-d in an unlimited and unrestricted fashion; when the soul is prepared to give everything—with total self-sacrifice—for G-d, that is the first characteristic of *avodas perech*. Obsession for positive ideals can be a healthy form of obsession.

This does not mean that the person has to divorce himself from the material world. Rather it means that one views everything in life as an opportunity to better serve G-d. Since life affords us infinite opportunities, this translates into infinite ways of serving G-d.

When one's service of G-d is generated from the soul, one does not seek any benefit for its service to G-d. It's not that no benefit will derive from this service; it simply means that one is imbued with a sense of dedication, in relation to which all benefits are meaningless.

Not having any benefit means that one has transcended the need for those benefits. And when the benefits do arrive they are seen for what they truly are; positive results of positive action, and not as the "pay-off" for the initial sacrifice that was made.

Hence, the soul's dedication can be described as a positive form of *avodas perech* because the work is of an endless, infinite nature and one that transcends all benefits.

Garbled Messages from the Soul

While we differentiated between kosher workaholics and its non-kosher counterpart, one may suggest that they are closely interrelated. The misguided obsession for work derives from the soul's love of labor for that which is good and holy. Workaholics actually use misplaced dedication, which emanates from their soul's obsession with the higher and more G-dly pursuits in life.

We all possess this G-dly soul that is constantly "sending" us messages about its spiritual agenda and its G-dly desires. We do

not always possess the proper "receptors" that understand what it is that the soul truly desires. Frequently our conscious mind "picks up" a warped and misguided message. As a result, instead of translating the soul's desires into idealistic efforts in that direction, we use it for the aimless dedication to our careers that knows no respite and has no moral and spiritual objective.

Modern Day Liberation from Egyptian Bondage

It is sad that we should misuse our G-d given talents for spiritual growth in the rat race of modern day life. Going out of Egypt daily in a modern context thus means, to acquire the proper perspective about our role in life, and a proper list of priorities.

Never before have we been plagued with this sort of Egyptian bondage. This can be attributed to the fact that we are on the verge of another Exodus, the Redemption from the exile we have been living through

for close to two thousand years since the destruction of the Holy Temple.

Our souls yearn to be free, and our souls are sending us messages that we very often misconstrue for the opposite. Our souls are profoundly undernourished. They crave the spiritual benefits, both intrinsic as well as the "fringe benefits". These benefits accrue from our total devotion to being G-d's partner in His plan to transform this world into His "dwelling-place." Instead, we harness the soul's energy to building sandcastles that cannot and will not endure.

Our own personal exodus from our own form of Egyptian bondage, by listening to our soul's voice and cry, will definitely prepare us and serve as a catalyst for the ultimate and imminent Redemption from physical exile.

FOUR REDEMPTIONS PLUS ONE

FOUR REDEMPTIONS PLUS ONE

Four Cups, Four Expressions

At the seder we drink four cups of wine. One of the reasons for this practice is that when G-d told Moses about the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, He used four different expressions of redemption:

"I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments and I will take you to me as a nation."

These are the four expressions of Redemption that G-d told Moses to convey to the Jewish people in Egypt prior to their departure from Egypt. And corresponding to these four expressions we drink four cups of wine.

The question that arises here is why did G-d have to tell them the good news by employing four different expressions of redemption? Wouldn't it have been sufficient to say: "I will liberate you from Egypt?"

Four Stages of Redemption

In truth, the experience of the exodus from Egypt was a fourfold one. It was crucial that they realized that there was a need to be aware of and show appreciation for all the four stages of redemption.

(a) **I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians**. This refers to their release from the tortuous bondage. Jews were not just slaves; they were tortured in the most cruel fashion. To be relieved of the persecution, even to remain slaves, would have been cause for celebration.

(b) **I will deliver you from their bondage.** This refers to their release from servitude. Even though their emancipation would have left them subjects of Pharaoh in a totalitarian regime, they would have been eternally grateful to G-d for having removed the

shackle of slavery from them.

(c) **I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments.** This refers to their liberation from Egypt. Previously, our Sages reveal, no slave had ever fled Egypt. Egypt was a veritable prison for all its undesirables.

If they would have been forced to remain in Egypt they could never have developed a national identity. Now they were a free people, with the opportunity to express their G-d given potential and follow in the footsteps of their ancestors, unimpeded.

(d) **I will take you to me as a nation.** This refers to their spiritual liberation that occurred when G-d took them as a nation at Mount Sinai. Even if they would have been allowed to leave Egypt and assume a national identity, they would have still not been totally free.

To be liberated without being taken by G-d at Mount Sinai would have been incomplete, because, they still would have retained a slave and exile mentality. The experience of Sinai, when they received and

accepted the Torah, gave the Jewish people the ability to rise above the exile mindset. They were now given a positive identity not just the absence of a negative experience and identity.

Because of these four expressions of Redemption that appear in this week's parsha, the rabbis instituted the drinking of four cups of wine during the *seder* of Passover, as a reminder of the four incredible stages of Redemption, each of which deserves our expression of gratitude and joyous celebration.

The Four Exiles

Alternatively, these four expressions are said to correspond to the four redemptions from the Egyptian and subsequent exiles the Jews would endure. All of the subsequent forms of exile were rooted in the Egyptian Bondage—"the mother of all forms of bondage and exile."

The Roman exile—the one we are still in since the Romans destroyed the Second Temple—was the most brutal of all. The

Romans and their Nazi and Communist heirs enslaved and massacred millions of Jews. That we are presently free from such persecution—a taste of the future Messianic Redemption—warrants the "drinking" of the first cup of wine.

The Babylonian exile that coincided with their destruction of the First Temple was not as brutal as the Roman exile and was of a significantly shorter duration. Nevertheless, the Babylonian's subjugated the Jewish people and crushed their spirits by virtue of their enslavement and subservience to them. Daniel, was an advisor to the king; yet he was still a slave to him.

Our liberation from Babylonian exile is what the second expression of Redemption alludes to and for which reason we drink a second cup.

The Persians were far more benign in their treatment of Jews—the threat of Haman a notable exception—but Achasveirosh, in spite of his Jewish wife and Prime Minister, did not allow the Jews to return t Israel and finish the rebuilding of the Temple.

Our liberation from Persian exile is the theme of the third cup; thanking G-d and rejoicing over the end of the Persian exile, and the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple.

The Greek exile was one that occurred while the Jewish nation resided in their own land. The Greeks did not initially persecute or enslave the Jews or exile them from their land. They did, however, prevent them from experiencing their spiritual identities, by attempting to Hellenize them. They were trying to take them away from their experience of Sinai and render them spiritual slaves to the Greek pagan and immoral ways.

The Fifth Expression

Upon closer scrutiny one can find a fifth expression in the Biblical narrative of the Exodus from Egypt: "And I will bring you to the good land..."

This expression is said to correspond to the future Redemption and Messianic Age. Some commentators state that the fifth cup of

Elijah we have at the Seder corresponds to this fifth expression of Redemption. That redemption, we are told, will be ushered in by the prophet Elijah who will announce the coming of Moshiach.

The fact that G-d mentioned this fifth expression in the context of the Redemption from Egypt suggests that the future Redemption, in reality, began thousands of years back when the first exodus from Egypt commenced.

In the words of the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, "Ever since the Exodus from Egypt we are on our way to the future Redemption."

What this means is that from the moment the Jews were liberated from Egypt, the entire process and dynamic of liberation was already unleashed. It is not something that we have to create now; it is the culmination of a process. For over three thousand years we worked on making that which has already been generated, complete.

Four Levels of Spiritual Freedom in Contemporary Life

One way of understanding the completeness of the process of redemption as it pertains to the four aforementioned levels is as follows.

A person can be freed from torture or any other abusive situation that comes to a person from the "outside," but can still be plagued by inner turmoil and anguish that is just as bad, if not worse, as torture from the outside.

One can be freed as a slave, but still have others who act like one's masters; even if they are not abusive.

One can be free from a given country, but still feel pain at having left their host country and have no country to call their own. In a more specific sense, one can become a slave to one's location, finding it hard to leave. When they ultimately muster the courage to get out of the confining and stifling environment in which they were situated previously, they may not have found a location they can call their own. Though one might be better off than they were before,

they may still feel a void, because they have not yet found a new location and environment within which to find self-fulfillment.

And finally, one can have the Torah that provides us with inner freedom, gives us an identity and fills in the void, but because of exile conditions we might learn Torah in an exile-tainted manner.

To correct all of the above, we need the fifth expression and its imminent realization. Then we will be rid of all external and internal turmoil. We will have no master other than G-d and our Torah study, which we will hear from the mouth of Moshiach in our own Land of Israel. Our study of Torah and observance of the Mitzvot will not be tarnished or compromised, because we will have experienced all five levels of Redemption that will rid us of the last vestige of external as well as internal exile.

FOUR CUPS PLUS ONE

FOUR CUPS PLUS ONE

Why not a Fifth cup of Wine?

This week's Torah portion features the four expressions of Redemption: "I will take you out...rescue you...redeem you...take you... bring you to the land, and give it to you as a heritage." The four cups we drink Passover night at the Seder were instituted by our sages as a means to express these four expressions/dimensions of liberation.

The question has been raised. Closer scrutiny of the text will show that there are actually five expressions of Redemption. The fifth expression might even be regarded as the most important stage because it represents the climax of all the others. "*Ve'heiveiti,* And I shall bring you to the land," is G-d's promise to the Jewish people that their freedom will ultimately take root in their own land.

Why then don't we drink a fifth cup for the fifth expression, "*Ve'heiveiti*—"will bring you"?

Non-inclusive is Incomplete Freedom

One answer given is that the first four expressions of redemption are addressed to the *entire* Jewish community. However, the fifth expression, "I will bring you," refers to the giving of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people and does not apply to the tribe of Levi, because they did not have their own portion of the Land of Israel. They only had forty two cities plus the six cities of refuge, which were given to them by the other tribes (Numbers 35).

Since "I will bring you" does not apply to **everyone** equally, we do not drink a fifth cup. The idea of drinking a cup of wine is an expression of joy. And while we can rejoice somewhat for the good that we experience ourselves—thus we have the fifth cup on the *seder* table—nevertheless we cannot fully enjoy our blessing since it is not shared by all. Thus we do not drink the fifth cup.

Yet a fifth cup is placed on the table and called "Elijah's cup" because he is the prophet who will announce the coming of Moshiach and that will remedy the exclusion of the Tribe of Levi from an inheritance in the Land.

When Moshiach comes, the Talmud tells us, Eretz Yisrael will be divided into 13 portions (*Bava Batra* 122a), and also the tribe of Levi will receive its **own** portion. The tribes of Ephraim and Menasheh, who previously were given two sections of the land, will share the one portion allotted to the tribe of Joseph, and the 13th portion will be for Moshiach. Hence, it is most appropriate to associate *Elijah* with the fifth cup, for through him all the Jews will be given a heritage in the land. And then our joy will be complete.

Liberating the Four Levels of the Soul

On a deeper level, one can answer the question as to why we don't drink a fifth cup that corresponds to the fifth expression, *Ve'heiveiti*, based on the assertion that the four expressions of Redemption represent the

four names/levels of the soul—enumerated in the Midrash and discussed at length in Jewish Mysticism—which are liberated on Passover night.

Passover, as we discussed in the preceding essays is more than just a physical liberation. The four expressions of redemption are expressions of liberation for all of the four levels of the soul, referred to in the Midrash and Kabbalah as *nefesh, ruach, neshama*, and *chaya*. They correspond to the faculties of the soul that generate our power of action, emotion, intellect and will, respectively.

The fifth expression, which corresponds to the fifth level, the very essence of the soul, known as *Yechidah* (unique), will only be fully expressed in the Messianic age.

Only on Yom Kippur

Presently, we can only hope to experience our soul's essence at appointed intervals, such as Yom Kippur at the concluding *Ne'ilah* service. There are references in Chassidic literature to the *Yechidah* being revealed at

times of spiritual crises, such as when Jews are forcibly given a choice to embrace another religion or die. At that point the Jew's essence explodes and energizes the Jew to sustain even the most cruel torture.

These incidents are rare and certainly not something that we look for. Most of the time, most of the people, will experience the opening up of the four more conventional levels of the soul.

Yom Kippur All-Year Round

When Moshiach comes, however, we will all discover that our *Yechidah* is a part of our soul's consciousness. One will not have to wait for Yom Kippur or a threat to one's life, to be jolted into realizing one's *Yechidah*. Indeed, we won't have to be jolted into the realization of our soul's essence. Rather, we will all be "in-touch" with the entire spectrum of our soul's faculties, from *Nefesh* through *Yechidah*.

Hence the fifth cup is the one that corresponds to the future. As long as we are

in exile we can just gaze upon the fifth cup as a way of whetting our appetite for that time when even the essence of our souls will be fully manifested.

FOUR TO THE FOURTH POWER

FOUR TO THE FOURTH POWER

The Paradigm of Redemption

The Exodus from Egypt is the paradigm for the future Redemption. The Exodus introduced and instilled within our psyches the power of liberation for the future. Indeed, we mention the Exodus daily in our prayers for many reasons, including:

First, to remind us that we too have to get out of exile, and that we can derive the power to accomplish that from the Exodus from Egypt.

Second, even as we live in exile—in these last moments before the Final Redemption—we have the ability to rise above the constraints imposed by exile conditions and to be liberated each day anew.

Obviously, the details of the Exodus from Egypt are relevant for our times.

Four Expressions of Redemption; Four Cups of Wine

In the very beginning of this week's parsha G-d introduces His plan for the Exodus by couching the theme of liberation in four different ways:

...I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt.

I shall rescue you from their service

I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

I shall take you to Me for a people and I shall be a G-d to you...

It was based on these four expressions of liberation that our Sages instituted drinking four cups of wine at the Seder Pesach night.

Let us consider how do these four expressions apply to our lives in exile and,

particularly, how do they relate to the future Redemption.

4x4x4x4

If we examine Maimonides' (whose Yahrtzeit we observed only last week on the 20th of Teves) description of the Messianic Age, we can discern four stages; in fact, there are several sets of fours that pertain to the Moshiach and the Messianic Age, but first a prefatory note is in order.

Contrary to a false belief that has circulated in recent times, we Jews believe not only in a Messianic Age, but also that it will be ushered in by a Jewish leader, referred to as the Moshiach. Indeed, there is no such thing as Redemption without a redeemer. In Maimonides' words (*Hilchos Melachim* Chapter 11): "Whoever does not believe in him… denies not only the other prophets, but [also] the Torah and Moses, our teacher."

How do we know who is qualified to be Moshiach? Maimonides, based on Biblical and

Talmudic sources, ruled that Moshiach's "credentials" require that he meets **four** conditions:

First, he is a leader descended from King David.

Second, he is steeped in Torah and preoccupied with observing its commandments.

Third, he is engaged in influencing all Jewish people to follow in the Torah's ways and mends the breaches in its observance.

Fourth, he fights the wars of G-d.

One who meets these four conditions, Maimonides rules, has established himself as the presumptive Moshiach, even before the actual Redemption commences.

It is interesting to note that Maimonides cites **four** Biblical proofs for Moshiach and the Messianic Age:

First, from Deuteronomy (30:3-5) where the promise of Redemption is made in **four** segments: 1) G-d will bring back your captives

and have mercy upon you; 2) He will gather you...; 3) If your dispersed will be at the ends of the heavens...; 4) –d will bring you...

Second, from statements made by all of the prophets.

Third, from the prophecies of Bilam. And interestingly there too, the Rambam divides the proof from Bilam into four segments.

Fourth, from the additional cities of refuge the Torah states will be established in the future.

Four Changes for the Jewish People

Now that we know the criteria for the Moshiach, we can discern **four** changes that will occur under his direction, specifically with respect to the Jewish people.

First, he renews the Davidic dynasty, returning it to its initial sovereignty.

Second, Moshiach will build the Bais Hamikdash-the Holy Temple in its proper place.

Third, he will gather all of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel.

Fourth, he will reinstate all of the ritual worship practices that could not be performed because of exile conditions.

Four for the Entire World

After Moshiach restores the status of the Jewish people and their observances to their rightful place, the Messianic Age then assumes a more universal direction. Here too one may discern four stages:

First, Moshiach will eradicate the evil forces that persecuted the Jewish people and stood in the way of their ability to build the Bais Hamikdash, etc.

Second, Moshiach will then eliminate the false ideologies and religions that contradict the Torah and lead the entire world's population to recognize that there is only one G-d and serve Him in unison.

Third, the entire world's population will live in peace and harmony with the Jewish people.

Fourth, there will be no hunger, war or conflicts for there will be an abundance of good and the entire world will be inundated and deluged with the knowledge of G-d.

The Final Stages

If we examine Maimonides' description of the final stage of the Messianic Age we discover that he refers to **four** changes:

> "In that era, there will be neither 1) famine, 2) nor war, 3) envy, nor 4) rivalry."

After describing what we will no longer have to contend with in the Messianic Age, Maimonides then proceeds to enumerate four positive phenomena:

> 1) For good will flow in abundance; 2) All the delights will be as common as dust; 3) The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d; 4) The Jews will be great Sages and know hidden matters, attaining knowledge of

their Creator to the extent of human potential.

Notice that in the last item describing the spiritual state of the Jewish people, Maimonides subdivides it into four:

1) Great Sages; 2) Know hidden matters; 3) Attaining knowledge of their Creator; 4) To the extent of human potential.

Four for *Our* Freedom

Now that we have documented the ubiquitous nature of the **four** aspects of the future Redemption that stem from the four expressions of Redemption in relation to the Exodus, we have to understand how the number four relates to our personal liberation from our own internal exile.

The number four, in conjunction with the Seder (which is full of fours, such as the Four Questions, the Four Sons, etc.), has been associated with the four letters of the Divine name, known as the Tetragrammaton. This

name of G-d contains the force responsible for creation in general and the human condition in particular. Each one of us possesses these four letters of G-d's name in our soul and psyche.

However, just as these four Divine letters are responsible for our personalities, they can also be seen as the forces to remove the exile-related blockages preventing us from experiencing the full force of our G-dly soul.

The first step to freeing ourselves begins with the letter *yud.* This letter is the smallest in the Hebrew Alphabet. It is represented sometimes by a geometric point that has no real dimensions. This is the symbol of humility. When we are full of ourselves we are not receptive to G-d. We can we see Creation but only from within Creation's perspective, not from the point of view of the Creator. The *yud* expresses of the essence of our soul, that part which is always connected to G-d but remains covered up by exile. We must put our own egos to the side and allow our simple faith in G-d and in His promise to redeem us and bring our souls to the surface.

The second step is bound up in the letter *hei*. This is an expansive letter and it represents expansive knowledge. Simple faith alone will not suffice. To be sure, we must develop a foundation of unadulterated faith in G-d and His ability to take us out of both the universal and personal exile. But we must then apply our intellect to gain the understanding of the dynamics of liberation. In practical terms, we must study Torah, particularly the texts of Torah that deal with Redemption, to saturate our minds with Divine wisdom. This will enable us to get our minds out of their own form of exile.

The third step is centered on the letter *vav,* which is said to represent our emotions. Our emotions are skewed by exile. We lack desire and passion for G-d and Moshiach since we direct our love and fear only toward the material and physical aspects of life.

Once we have liberated our faith (*Yud)* and achieved our understanding (*Hei)* we can then free our emotions (*Vav*). Instead of harboring misdirected passion for material things, our passion becomes refined enough

to love the Higher aspects of life. At that juncture we will desire and yearn only for Moshiach and the world of Redemption. However, we can not only rely on our faith and intellect to generate the liberating emotions; we must, as the Torah states, "**direct** the knowledge to our hearts."

The fourth and final stage in our efforts at liberation is the final letter of the Tetragrammaton, the *Hei.* This letter is said to correspond to the process of communication of our thoughts through speech and action.

It is not enough to have the proper faith, understanding and passion. The proof that we have internalized something to the extent that it has truly affected us comes when we translate those newly attained thoughts into speech and action. How may we apply this to our circumstances today? We should speak of Redemption and translate our belief, understanding and feelings of Redemption into tangible examples by breaking free from our internal exile. We can do that by acting in a redemptive fashion. When we break out

of the elements that limit us and do things that may be against our nature to help others, we then have successfully internalized all four letters of G-d's name and brought ourselves into a personal balance that parallels the four expressions and levels of Redemption.

TOP PRIORITY

TOP PRIORITY

"The L-rd took us out of Egypt," not through an angel, not through a seraph and not through a messenger. The Holy One, blessed be He, did it in His glory by Himself!

Thus it is said: "In that night I will pass through the land of Egypt, and I will smite every first-born in the land of Egypt, from man to beast, and I will carry out judgments against all the gods of Egypt, I the L-rd."

"I will pass through the land of Egypt," I and not an angel;

"And I will smite every first-born in the land of Egypt," I and not a seraph;

"And I will carry out judgments against all the gods of Egypt," I and not a messenger;

"I- the L-rd," it is I, and none other!

Why not Send an Angel?

"I and not an angel, 'I' and not a messenger, but the Holy One, Blessed is He," was the one to bring the tenth plague and liberate the Jews from Egypt.

These words, taken from the Passover *Haggadah,* describe the unique nature of G-d's involvement in the Tenth plague and in the subsequent exodus from Egypt.

Every detail of the Torah was recorded not to simply inform us about events of the past. The Torah is not a history book, but a Divine blueprint for our lives. Every detail and nuance recorded in the Torah must serve as a lesson for us in our daily lives.

What, we may ask, is the lesson we are to derive from G-d's direct involvement in the exodus from Egypt?

In truth, the emphasis on G-d doing it directly also needs clarification. Why was it so crucial that He did not delegate the task of liberating the Jews to an angel?

If G-d had chosen to liberate the Jews from Egypt through one of his angels would that

have diminished the significance of the Exodus? After all, an angel is no more than G-d's messenger and instrument to carry out His will. Even if G-d had chosen to liberate them by way of an angel, the Exodus would still have been attributed to G-d as the one who sent the angel to do the job. Why begrudge the angel its role as the instrument of G-d?

Emulating G-d

One of the principles of Judaism is the need to emulate G-d, *imitatio dei*. Whatever the Torah tells us about G-d is actually a challenge for us to implement His behavior in our own lives: "G-d visited the sick, so we have an obligation to visit the sick," says the Talmud. By emulating G-d, we ourselves become G-dly and are able to express our own G-dly nature.

But, G-d is also a Creator. How do **we** create a universe? Isn't creation something that only an omnipotent G-d can do?

The answer, provided by our Sages, is that G-d has given us the opportunity to be His

partner in creation. By working six days a week to reshape, change and refine the world and then rest on the Shabbat and proclaim that G-d is the Creator, "we become partners to G-d in the act of Creation."

How do we become Liberators?

But, isn't G-d also a liberator? How do we liberate the Jewish people from exile? How do we bring about Redemption for the entire world? Isn't that something only an omnipotent G-d can do? How can we be asked to emulate G-d and become liberators?

The answer is that whenever we succeed in extricating one Jew from the state of alienation from G-d, and bring him closer to Judaism, we have, in effect, liberated an entire world. Our sages tell us that "one who saves but one person is as if he had saved an entire universe."

Two Attitudes in the Process of Liberation

However, there can be two approaches to the effort at liberating the individual. One can

invest their strongest efforts and best talents for what one might consider to be the more important and sublime goals in life, such as Torah study and the observance of Mitzvot that are geared to one's personal development. When it comes to liberating others, one might feel that s/he could invest much less talent, energy and time.

To dispel this notion that somehow the process of liberation is less important than one's self-development, the Torah tells us that G-d was **directly** involved in the process of the Exodus from Egypt. He did not "delegate" the responsibility to angels, because, G-d considers the liberation of the Jewish people from spiritual and physical confinement as His highest priority.

We too, must emulate G-d and invest our best and most in reaching "in" to every Jew to uncover their G-dly spirit. This process of liberation cannot be delegated to others and cannot be relegated to a lower level of priority.

Liberating the Individual and Liberating the World

Indeed, the liberation of the individual is an integral part of the process of the liberation of the entire Jewish people and the entire world.

There is nothing in life that assumes greater importance than the process of liberating the whole world. Our Sages define the term "*Mitzvah Rabbah*-a great Mitzvah" as a reference to redeeming a captive from captivity, how much more so if we redeem all the captives of the world.

And since by definition we are all captives in exile—including G-d, who, the Talmud says, is also held "captive" in exile—there can be nothing greater than by performing any act that has the capacity to bring about Redemption. This, we accomplish by every Mitzvah we perform, but particularly, when we endeavor to help another experience their own exodus from Egypt. This will certainly hasten the ultimate liberation from this exile, with the imminent coming of Moshiach.

STAFF EATS STAFFS

STAFF EATS STAFFS

"And with signs," this refers to the staff, as it is said: "Take into your hand this staff with which you shall perform the signs."

Introduction to the Ten Plague Therapy

When G-d sent Moses to Pharaoh, the first sign he was to use to demonstrate G-d's power—even before the Ten Plagues—was the throwing of Aaron's staff before Pharaoh, which then turned into a serpent. The Egyptian sorcerers then replicated his wonder. Afterwards, Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

If G-d's intent was to merely impress Pharaoh that Moses had supernatural powers, there were many other miracles he could have performed. Why the conversion of a staff into a snake and then having his staff swallow up the Egyptian ones? And why was this miracle a prelude to the Ten Plagues that followed?

In truth, all of the Ten Plagues were not just instruments of punishment, but a means to crush the evil of Egypt.

Indeed, the Jewish view of punishment in general is that it is a means to an end. The end is rehabilitation. Hence, the Ten Plagues were essentially an educational process that consisted of ten steps, or ten specific lessons.

Accordingly, the miracle of the staff-turning-into-a-snake served as a general introduction to the whole process of educating the Egyptians.

Since we are required to remember and internalize the process of the Exodus every day, it follows that we must apply the ten plagues to our own internal "Egypt." Moreover, prior to applying the "Ten Plague therapy" we must preface the lesson from the staff-snake miracle. Thus, for us to experience true freedom and to literally bring about the final Redemption, we must first and foremost apply the lesson of the staff turned into a snake to our own lives and our relationships with others.

Piercing the armor

When we approach another who needs our guidance, Jewish law demands that we begin with and accentuate the positive approach. With soothing and loving words, we can accomplish much more than with harsh and stinging words of recrimination. This is known as the approach of Aaron who "Loved peace, pursued peace, loved every creature and drew them close to the Torah." (Ethics of the Fathers)

Unfortunately, there are times when the approach of "tough love" is required. There are people who are so covered with "steel armor" that makes them impregnable. They are impervious to any positive influences and they are resistant to our positive approach.

There is only one way of getting through to them. And that is by shattering their shell and piercing their armor. In Hebrew terminology this is the process of "*beliah*-swallowing" the other's resistant ego.

This then is the significance of Aaron's staff swallowing up the staffs of the Egyptians. When a person is compelled to use the

method of "tough love" and shatter the inflated ego of the person who is need of therapy, it must be done with "**Aaron's** staff; the staff of a person whose sole motivation is love and absolute concern for the good of the person he is admonishing. Anyone else's harshness will either have no effect or may even have a deleterious effect.

Stiff like a Staff

There is still another powerful lesson in the narrative of Aaron's staff that swallowed the Egyptian staffs. As our sages point out, it was Aaron's **staff** that swallowed up the Egyptian staffs and not his snake. Only after his snake (that had originally been a staff) reverted to being a staff, did it swallow the Egyptian's staffs.

The lesson in this is that when one is compelled to discipline another it does not suffice for the *motivation* alone to be love. The disciplining procedure itself—while not overtly loving—cannot be laden with emotion of anger and hostility. Rather, one must act like a "staff" that is devoid of

emotion and sense of ego. To shatter another person's inflated ego, it is important that it not be done with a feeling of ego and need to dominate over others.

With this introduction, one can then proceed to administer "Ten Plague Therapy" that enables us to pierce through the obstacles that stand in the way of our spiritual freedom.

And while we try to change the world for the better, to prepare it for the ultimate Redemption through Moshiach, not only is the end result one of goodness, not only is our motivation goodness, but even the means and mechanism permeated with goodness.

THE TEN PLAGUES (I)

THE TEN PLAGUES (1)

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

Punishment with an Educational Goal

In the Torah the Ten Plagues are divided into two Torah portions. In the Torah portion of *Va'eira*, only seven of the ten are mentioned. The balance of the plagues is mentioned in the next *parsha, Bo*.

What is the significance of the Ten Plagues being divided into two, and why seven in one parsha and three in the other?

We often think of these terrible calamities G-d visited on Pharaoh and the Egyptian people as examples of Divine retribution. Yet, if G-d wanted to punish them, there was no need for ten plagues. G-d could have eliminated them in

one devastating plague. Why the need for dramatics?

In truth, G-d does not punish for the sake of punishment. The purpose of bringing the ten plagues was educational as much as it was G-d's way of expressing His outrage at the treatment the Jewish people received from the Egyptian people.

Furthermore, it could be demonstrated that G-d was not simply punishing Pharaoh. The Torah states that G-d said, "And I will harden the heart of Pharaoh" (Exodus 7:3). If Pharaoh deserved to be punished, why didn't G-d merely punish him without taking away his free will? Rather Pharaoh's punishment was meted out by G-d measure for measure. Pharaoh rebelled against G-d, saying, "Who is G-d that I should obey his voice?" Anyone who insolently refuses to recognize G-d, and thinks he can do as he pleases, deserves that G-d will show him he is not his own boss; that without G-d's consent he could not even express his own will.

But, the educational lesson of the plagues extends to each and every one of them. Each of

the ten plagues introduced the world to another dimension of G-d and His love for the Jewish people. Education cannot come in one sweeping and overwhelming experience. There was a need for ten lessons.

The Ten (Seven?) Lessons

What follows is but one approach to the educational value of each of the ten plagues.

The first plagues of blood and frogs, which demonstrated that the Nile was not the G-d the Egyptian people thought it was.

The third plague of lice, which the Egyptians could not replicate, demonstrated that the one G-d of Israel is the only true G-d.

The fourth and fifth plagues of the mixture of wild beasts and the plague of pestilence—which, as the Torah stresses, did not affect the Jewish people—expressed the love G-d has for them. The fourth plague demonstrated the love He has for their lives, whereas the fifth plague demonstrated that the love for them extended even to their property. Even their

animals were protected form the plague of pestilence.

The sixth plague of boils, in addition to the fact that it comprised many miracles, as Rashi explains, it was also the first plague that was directed against their bodies. The preceding plagues touched their gods, environment and property, but not their bodies. Even the the fourth plague, which involved the mixture of wild beasts, did not necessarily harm anyone who did not stand in their way, though it certainly frightened them. This plague actually afflicted all of their bodies.

This plague taught them that G-d is in control not only of the natural world, but also of man.

Another moral lesson to apply to our own educational practices is that corporal punishment, even when mandated, should be used only as a last resort.

The seventh—and last plague discussed in this week's Torah portion—the plague of hail, was intended to give them one final pivotal lesson, without which all the other six would have proven futile.

Hail to the Chief

What was unique about the plague of hail? No only was it miraculous but it unified the opposing forces of fire and water, as the hail contained a burning fire within it.

By punishing them with hail that contained within it fire, they realized that G-d had the ability to combine fire and water; that G-d was able to bring together two conflicting forces of nature and make peace between them.

Until this plague, the Egyptians could have thought that each plague was generated by another deity, who they thought was in control of each of the natural forces. When they saw how fire and water, the two most diametrically opposed natural forces were brought together, they realized that there is one G-d who transcends—and can therefore unite—all the forces of nature.

Had they not been exposed to this plague, they would have remained ignorant of the true nature of the one G-d. This seventh plague was the ultimate educational experience for them.

Post-Graduate Education

In the next parsha, the remaining three plagues are discussed.

Offhand, it is rather strange that the Torah split up the Ten Plagues into two separate portions.

In light of the analysis of the Ten Plagues as a series of educational experiences, however, we can understand why this week's parsha concludes with the seventh plague. Upon witnessing the plague of hail, they had already "graduated" the first and primary stage of their schooling. What follows in the next represents a more advanced—post-graduate level of education.

Or, perhaps, as the title of the next parsha, Bo-Come to Pharaoh, indicates, the objective of the last three plagues was to internalize the basic lessons that they received through the first seven plagues.

We are in Grade Seven Now.

"As in the days of your departure from Egypt, I shall show him wonders."

This Biblical verse informs us that the future Redemption will parallel the Exodus from Egypt. If one looks around at what is happening in the world, one could see how life's experiences are educational devices that point to the extent of G-d's powers and the imminence of a spiritual revolution that will usher in a new world. But of all that has transpired in the past century, one thing is becoming more and more obvious: the theme of unity.

Science and technology are becoming increasingly aware of the unification of the world on all levels. This is a reenactment of the seventh and final plague (Read: educational device) mentioned in the parsha of *Va'eira* that is a precursor to the Messianic Age when the entire world will recognize that "G-d is one and His name is one."

The next three plagues parallel the heightened level of education that will follow the coming of Moshiach.

This echoes the Kabbalistic interpretation of the Biblical prophecy that in the Messianic Age we will inherit three additional lands that will

be incorporated into the Land of Israel that originally comprised seven nations.

The original seven represent the lower aspects of our personality that requires refinement and elevation. That, we were capable of doing even in the past.

But the "post-graduate" level corresponding to the three nations cannot be tackled now. For that we will have to wait until we "Come to Pharaoh," (the opening words of the Torah portion that contains the last three plagues), which the Zohar interprets as entering into the most intimate precincts of G-dly energy.

THE TEN PLAGUES
(II)-THE LAST THREE

THE TEN PLAGUES (II)-THE LAST THREE

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

Last Three Plagues--Problematic

The Ten Plagues are divided into two categories. The first seven were discussed in the Torah portion of *Va'eira*, while the remaining three (locust, darkness and the death of the first-born) are reserved for the following portion of *bo.*

When we read about these ten plagues, and more specifically the last three, two questions come to mind:

First, why were the last three plagues not discussed together with the first seven? Why did they have to be separated into two sections?

Second, why was the plague of darkness next to the last plague? From all accounts it appears that the plagues were progressively devastating. We can easily comprehend how the death of the first-born was the last of the plagues. We can even understand why the plague of locusts followed the six previous ones. By consuming all their food, people would starve to death. But to live in darkness for a few days was just a nuisance and can hardly be compared to many of the earlier plagues.

Of a Different Magnitude

The answer to these questions is that the three plagues that appear in the *parsha bo* are of an entirely different order.

While the first seven plagues were spectacular, destructive and painful, they were of a temporary duration. After the week of blood, the water returned to normal. The

same is true for the frogs, lice, mixture of wild animals, the pestilence, boils and hail.

Human beings are extremely resilient creatures. Even when dealt a powerful blow, we have the ability to regain our strength to continue on with life and not be touched or significantly affected by the pain of the past. Even the pain at the tragic loss of a loved one is gradually eased with the passage of time.

The second set of plagues that are introduced in this week's *parsha* thus are of an entirely different magnitude.

Locust, All Pervasive

The plague of locust was all pervasive. It extended from one end of Egypt to the other. Moreover, it did not only impact their lives during the week of the plague itself, but it also affected the **future** of the Egyptian people. Without their crops that year, famine and death would be widespread throughout the land.

But even when one is afflicted with horrible suffering, the human condition enables them to find some measure of comfort and solace in the security of their home. Some people can withdraw into themselves and become impervious to the pain that touches their bodies.

Invasion of Inner Space

The plague of darkness was so pervasive that it entered into their homes.

The terror and paralysis that this darkness caused penetrated to the very core of their being. As our Sages tell us that one who was sitting at the onset of this plague could not stand and one who was standing could not sit. This means that the fear and terror was so profound that it left no "inner space" from which one can draw some measure of solace and enjoy some degree of respite.

So while the plague of locust extended beyond—into terms of both space and time—the plague of darkness went beyond the surface of their beings; penetrating to their very core.

The early Kabalistic tract, *Sefer Yetzirah* divides all of existence into three categories, known by their Hebrew acronym—*ashan:* These are *olam*-world or space, *shanah*-year or time; *nefesh*-soul or life. The eight and ninth plague extended the destruction in all three of these areas.

Plague of the First-Born—All Encompassing

And finally the plague of the first born came and extended the character of G-d's punishment of the Egyptians to a new depth.

The human being wants immortality, and we have it through our progeny. We can achieve this degree of immortality, more specifically, when our children follow in our footsteps and carry on the legacy we leave them.

In ancient cultures, the first-born is expected to assume the role of the father in the next generation. They were the priests and the leaders. With the death of the first-born Egyptians, they were not only dealt a devastating blow because the loss of one of their children, but it went even further. With this plague, that part of their being that is

immortal was destroyed. There could not have been a greater blow to them than through this plague.

In addition, the final plague extended in all directions in all the three areas of space, time and soul. This plague affected every single household. It had far-reaching ramifications for the future, inasmuch as it affected the next generation. And it also went to the core of their being as explained earlier.

Two Tiers of Positive Lessons

As we mentioned in preceding essays, the plagues must also serve as educational tools for our own moral and spiritual development. And since the Ten Plagues led to the Exodus from Egypt, it follows that by implementing the positive lessons from these plagues we are better prepared for the final Redemption through Moshiach.

The plagues can also be viewed as ways of energizing ourselves with spiritual energy. They are educational tools that provide us with instruments for growth.

However, there are two tiers of growth in our spiritual lives.

We begin with lessons that touch us on the surface and have a limited impact.

These temporary measures must be followed by more powerful influences that are all pervasive. We must see to it that the message of liberation consumes us (corresponding to the plague of locusts) and penetrates to the very core of our existence (corresponding to the plague of darkness) and that it reveals that part of our soul that is immortal and everlasting (corresponding to the plague of the First-Born).

And while Judaism does not underestimate the power of even one Mitzvah, the Messianic Age is characterized and ushered in by increase in our commitment to the ideals of Judaism, quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

THE TEN PLAGUES (III)

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These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

Ten Plagues and Ten Commandments

During the Seder we make reference to the Ten Plagues that G-d visited upon the Egyptians. The number ten is a significant number in our tradition. The most famous "ten" is the Decalogue, or the Ten Commandments. Since nothing happens by chance, what is the connection between the ten plagues and the ten commandments?

To find the connection it is necessary to first understand the function of the ten plagues. Why did G-d need to attack the Egyptians with so many plagues? He could have

brought them to their knees with just one plague.

The purpose of the ten plagues will be understood by referring to yet another set of "tens." G-d created the world, with ten statements, or Ten Utterances, as they are referred to in the Mishnah. For example, G-d said, "Let there be light!" or, "Let us make man" etc.

Introducing the Ten Commandments to the Ten Utterances

According to a Chassidic commentary, the purpose of the Ten Plagues was to introduce the Ten Commandments to the Ten Utterances. This statement obviously calls for an explanation.

Our mystical tradition introduces us to yet one more "ten," the Ten *Sefirot*, or Ten Divine attributes. The word "*sefirah*" (singular) or "*sefirot*" (plural) is very likely related to the English word "sphere" and derives from the Hebrew word *sapir* (sapphire), which means "shining light." It is also related to the word "sippur," which

means story. The *sefirot* are thus G-d's light that relates G-d's "story" to the world.

When G-d created the world, His creative energy (Ten *Sefirot*) was channeled through the Ten Utterances. These Ten Utterances, however, obscured the G-dly energy that they channeled, so that the world would not see G-d's force in creation and be overwhelmed by its presence. If G-d's presence were readily apparent to all, there would be no room for free choice and the very purpose of creation—that we humans of our own volition "invite" G-d into this world—would be undermined

The reason why G-d's *Sefirot* are not seen is because the world (*olam* in Hebrew which means concealed) was created through a process called *tzimtzum,* which means *c*ontraction or condensation. This means that G-d contracted, constrained and concealed His own presence when he made the Ten Utterances. This he did, as stated, so that we should be given the ability to introduce G-d to our world through our own efforts.

The word for constraints in Hebrew is *Meitzarim,* which is related to the word *Mitzraim*-Egypt. Egypt thus symbolizes the obscuring of G-d's creative energy and light.

Breaking through the Barriers

G-d's intention, though, was that ultimately the Divine power generated through His Ten *Sefirot* would break through the barriers and constraints. To effect this change—to reveal the Ten *Sefirot* within a world that was created through Ten Utterances, or ten filters—G-d gave us the Ten commandments. Each commandment was given the capacity to remove the obscuring power of one of the Ten Utterances and thereby allow the Ten *Sefirot*, the G-dly emanations to shine unobstructed within our world.

But, for the Ten Commandments to be effective, they had to penetrate the gross nature of the world, represented by Egypt's immoral and pagan nature. To introduce the G-dly Sefirot to the Utterances, G-d "had" to "scrape" away the layers of gross materialism of Egypt.

Every plague chipped away at another layer or characteristic of Egypt—and through Egypt—the rest of the physical world, preparing it for the Ten Commandments and its ultimate transformation of the world.

Plowing Before the Sowing

The role of the Ten plagues as a prelude to the Ten Commandments can thus be compared to the need to plow before one is ready to sow, or—to use a military analogy— the need to "soften" the enemy before the invasion.

In light of the above analysis, the Ten Plagues were not just G-d's way of punishing the Egyptians. They were G-d's agents that prepared the world for the Ten Commandments. By softening the resistance of the constraining effects of Egyptian culture and impurity, the Ten Commandments would now have the capacity to infiltrate the Ten Utterances and reveal their true G-dly nature and source: the Ten *Sefirot*.

We can now understand why the Ten Commandments were not given in an earlier

generation. In order for these commandments to have their desired effect on the world, the obstructive forces of Egypt had to be neutralized. Only after the Ten Plagues was that possible.

Of course, we must also understand why the Israelites had o go through hundreds of years of exile and bondage before getting the Torah. But that too was a way of refining the Jewish nation in the crucible of Egypt so that they would be capable of receiving the Torah.

However, not until the Ten Plagues that dealt the immoral forces that characterized Egyptian culture were crushed, was it possible for the Ten Commandments to have an impact on the world at large.

In other words, for the Ten Commandments to be received and internalized by the Jewish nation there was a need for their cathartic experience in Egyptian bondage. For the world at large—represented by the Ten Utterances—to be receptive to the Ten Commandments, the Ten Plagues were necessary.

An Ongoing Process

This process has not ended with the Ten Plagues and the giving of the Ten Commandments. Every day we receive the Ten Commandments and the entire Torah anew, and every day we must go through a process of refinement that makes us less impervious and more receptive to the Divine message. Particularly, every Passover night, when we recite the Ten Plagues we empower the Ten Commandments to ultimately fulfill their mission to make the world a Divine place.

In the course of the last few thousand years that we've been reciting the *Haggadah* and the Ten Plagues every Passover night, we've been chipping away at the resistant nature of the world to G-d and His teachings. But it was not wasted, G-d forbid. All of these efforts accumulate and will bear fruit. We will—imminently—finally succeed in removing every barrier to the G-dly light. This is what the Messianic Age is all about that will be ushered in imminently by our righteous Moshiach.

TEN PLAGUE THERAPY

TEN PLAGUE THERAPY

Ten Plagues Divided

The Ten Plagues are divided in the Torah over two segments. Seven of them were described in last week's parsha and the final three are in this week's parsha.

The question has been asked, why this division?

One approach to answering this question is based on the notion that the Ten Plagues were directed not just against the bodies and property of the Egyptian people, but also against their personalities. A human being consists of Ten Faculties (corresponding to and derived from the Ten Divine Attributes) divided into two categories; three are intellectual faculties with seven emotional ones.

The Alter Rebbe, in his classic work the Tanya, traces the difference between the Ten Faculties of our G-dly Souls and how they differ from the parallel Ten Attributes of our Animal Souls. The G-dly Soul is governed by its intellect, which control the emotions. In stark contrast, the Animal Soul is primarily governed by its emotions, and uses its intellect as a means to serve its emotional end.

Egypt and the Egyptian exile symbolize and embody the lowliest manifestation of the Animal Soul's emotional state. This is particularly true of their desire to enslave and persecute the children of Israel. That desire was born out of their hatred for the children of Israel. As the Torah stated in an earlier Parsha: "They became disgusted with the children of Israel." Once their negative emotions peaked, they used their superior intellectual prowess to find ways to suppress the Jewish people. The Torah illustrates the use of their intellect with the words of Pharaoh, "Let us outsmart [them]." Egypt harnessed the power of its collective depraved

mind to satisfy its decadent and cruel emotional priorities.

To counter the emotional evil of the Egyptians, G-d sent seven plagues, each directed at one of the seven character traits.

However, it would have been impossible to completely eradicate the Egyptian evil without also directly attacking its vicious mindset. That was the target of the last three plagues, recounted in this week's parsha.

Oriented by this introduction we can proceed to explain the significance of the last three plagues: Locusts, Darkness and the Plague of the Firstborn.

Three Plagues: *Da'as, Binah* and *Chochma*

The last of three intellectual levels—and the one closest to the emotions—is *Da'as,* the ability to attach oneself to an idea. Without *Da'as* one cannot generate feelings even if one fully understands the idea. *Da'as* is the bridge between the intellect and emotions. Hence it was the first target of the three plagues recorded in this week's parsha, which

aimed to undo the power of the Egyptians to harness their evil ideas to their emotions.

The first of the final triad of plagues was locusts, which devoured the grain of Egypt. Chassidic literature connects knowledge with grain, based on the statement of our Sages that: "A child does not know how to call his father until he eats grain." Along with the physical destruction of the grain supply the plague was a concomitant assault on the Egyptians' power of *Da'as*.

The next plague was darkness which, in spiritual terms, can mean the absence of *Binah*, the faculty responsible for shedding light on a subject. Absent a full blown examination of a subject one is left "in the dark." Hence the plague of darkness was directed against the Egyptian *Binah*-mindset. After this plague struck, the Egyptians were no longer capable of developing a sophisticated intellectual model for evil.

The final plague, the death of the firstborns, alludes to *Chochma*, which is the "first born" intellectual power; the power to conceive of an idea, on the basis of which one may

develop a full understanding. The literal death of the first-borns was paralleled by the destruction of the Egyptian mindset responsible for conceiving of the persecution of the Jewish people.

Only after Divine demolition of the Egyptian mindset, which had crept by osmosis into the Jewish nation's consciousness, were the children of Israel truly able to escape the Egyptian exile. Their physical bondage only ended because they had also defeated the Egyptian way of life; until then the emotional and intellectual foundation of the exile would have held its power to control them.

A Two Pronged Attack

It is well known that the Rebbe emphasized the study of the subject of Moshiach and Redemption in our own day and age, as we stand on the threshold of the final Redemption. The lesson of the Plagues has much to teach us about the challenges we face today. We easily recognize our need to physically get out of exile and have Moshiach lead us to the construction of the Bais Hamikdash but it is equally important that

we strategize how to get out of our *internal* exile. To that end we must divide our "attack" and fight our battle on two fronts: the emotional and the intellectual

The assault on our emotional attachment to exile can be mounted based on all of the *negatives* we still experience. When we witness the threats from those who would destroy the Jewish people or the Land of Israel, G-d forbid, it weakens our love affair with exile; we cry out "*Ad Masai*-How much longer?!" When we read of the tragic passing of people afflicted with terrible diseases or who suffer incredible pain, our hearts go out to them and we cry out to G-d: "we can't handle the ravages of exile any longer!"

The more we feel the biting pain of exile the more intolerable exile becomes the more we can start struggling free of our internal exile.

As we become more spiritually refined, we begin to understand that in exile G-d also "suffers." G-d revealed Himself to Moses via a burning bush, our Sages tell us, to indicate that "I am with them in distress." G-d now puts Himself in our shoes, so to speak, and

pleads with us to do our part in bringing Moshiach and release Him from self-imposed exile.

Sometime the emotional stimuli for wanting to get out of exile can come from the opposite *positive* direction; incredible positive changes have been seen in the world. These changes, the Rebbe revealed to us, are due to the efforts of Moshiach. They are a taste of and prelude to the "real thing—the true and complete Redemption. All of these positive developments, ranging from the collapse of the Soviet Union, last bastion of anti-Jewish and anti-Torah tyranny, to many incredible medical advances, should whet our appetite for the "full gourmet banquet" that will follow, imminently.

However, we can only succeed in completely eradicating every trace of exile resistance when we also attack the intellectual impediments to Geulah.

This is where the Rebbe's directive to learn the subjects of Moshiach and Geulah in the Torah enters the picture. To counter the negative intellectual underpinnings, the

mindset of exile, we must reorient our minds to see things through the liberating prism of Torah.

Ten Plague Mnemonic

We can now understand more deeply a section of the Haggadah we recite Passover night at the Seder. After listing the Ten Plagues, the Haggadah states:

"Rabbi Yehudah would use a mnemonic: *D'tzach, Adash B'achav* [the initials of the Ten Plagues]".

Now why did Rabbi Yehudah find it necessary to provide a mnemonic for the Ten Plagues? And why does the author of the Haggadah find it necessary to tell us that Rabbi Yehudah used his mnemonic for the Plagues?

Rabbi Yehudah was acutely aware that the purpose of the Seder goes beyond thanking G-d for liberating us. That is admirable, but it is not enough. Today the primary purpose of remembering the plagues is to help us understand our role in breaking this final exile. We too must use a Ten Plague therapy

to rid ourselves of any attachment to, allegiance with or affinity with exile. We need to reflect on the Ten Plagues to help us assault our own exile; both its emotional and its intellectual components.

Missing even one of the Ten Plagues would amount to leaving us with one, albeit small, vestige or seed of exile mentality or feeling. As a result, we would fail to liberate ourselves from internal exile. Unless eradicated, even a seed of exile can blossom into a full-fledged exile mentality. Rabbi Yehudah, whose name symbolizes Messianic leadership (Jacob's son Yehudah was the ancestor of Moshiach), could not afford to let us miss mentioning and internalizing even one of the plagues, lest it keep us in our own personal Galus.

That is why Rabbi Yehudah provided us with a mnemonic. It is a powerful memory aid to keep us from forgetting how to combat exile.

We can now better understand the words of the Haggadah, the literal translation of which is: "Rabbi Yehudah would give **them** a mnemonic." Who is the "them?" The simple meaning is that it refers to the plagues; he

supplied a mnemonic to help us recall each of the Ten Plagues. But, isn't that obvious? Why not just state: "Rabbi Yehudah gave a mnemonic."

Firing on All Our Cylinders!

We may suggest that Rabbi Yehudah, the man who symbolizes Moshiach and Redemption, instructed the Jewish people with his mnemonic to instill within **them** the memory of all the Ten Plagues. He wanted to ensure that we don't forget to use Ten Plague therapy for getting out of exile by internalizing each and every Plague, not stop at just reciting them. Our efforts to banish the Galus mindset cannot be a superficial exercise; it must become an integral part of our personality.

One of the symptoms of exile is forgetfulness. We forget things that are not essential to us. We forget things that are separate entities from ourselves. We don't forget things that are part and parcel of who we are. Rabbi Yehudah intended to place these reminders into "**them**," the Jewish people of all times, so that we can never forget that we need to be

firing on **all** our cylinders to complete our journey to Geulah!

THE TEN PLAGUES
THE FIRST STEP TO FREEDOM

THE TEN PLAGUES

THE FIRST STEP TO FREEDOM

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

Learning the Lessons

The Ten Plagues were the means by which G-d gradually got the Egyptians to release their stranglehold on the Jewish nation.

If the A-mighty had so desired, He could have simply wiped out the Egyptians in one fell swoop. There was no need to prolong the agony on either side. The Jewish People—or the "Israelites" as they were then called—did not have to spend an extra year (the time,

our Sages state, it took from the first plague until their liberation), to witness the way G-d inflicted pain and misery on their tormenters. We may presume that they would have preferred to be free one year earlier.

Yet G-d chose to strike the Egyptians with the Ten Plagues so that they—and we—would learn certain lessons about life that will enable us to free ourselves from all that gets in the way of enjoying our freedom.

In other words, while physical freedom is a cherished ideal, it will not be all that it is cracked up to be if we remain in an internal prison. If we cannot free ourselves from our bad habits, for example, we cannot truly be free.

Acknowledgement is First step to Freedom

Viewing the Ten Plagues in this light we must view them as ways of ridding ourselves of some of the things that limit us emotionally and spiritually.

The first plague was blood. All of the waterways of the Egyptians turned into blood.

Water was the source of life for the Egyptians. All of their food was produced with the water that came from the Nile through the man made irrigation canals.

It is interesting that the Torah relates how the Egyptians had to dig new wells because all the existing supplies of water were contaminated.

The question arises, if G-d's intention was to deprive them of water, why did the new supply of water not turn into blood?

A second question may be raised. If the point of the plague was to impress upon them G-d's might, it was a failure. First, the Egyptian magicians were able to replicate this plague. Second, with some additional effort on their part, they were able to find new supplies of water.

The simple explanation is that G-d did not want them to suffer inordinately for the first plague. There was a gradual increase in the pain inflicted on them from plague to plague.

Thus, G-d just made it extremely difficult for them to obtain clear water. He did not want to deprive them entirely of their water.

On a deeper level, we might suggest, G-d's intention was to point to a common human failure; of taking things for granted.

Before we can teach someone **whom** to thank and credit, we have to teach them how to recognize that there is indeed a need not to take things for granted.

Egyptians built an intricate system of irrigation canals. Since they were so accustomed to utilizing this system, they were no longer even grateful to their forebears for having provided them with a means of sustenance. So if they could not even get themselves to appreciate their parent's and grandparent's efforts, how could one have expected them to recognize G-d's role in their lives?

Therefore, the first plague forced them to realize that producing water is not a simple feat. It takes much energy and effort. Now that they were able to appreciate that things

do not just happen, they were ready to discover the ultimate Source of everything.

Redemption in Stages

As we approach the ultimate period of Redemption—that has been compared in the Prophetic writings to the Exodus from Egypt—we must go through several stages of development for us to appreciate the need for the Messianic Age.

The Messianic Age is more than a time of goodness and peace. It is first and foremost a time when we will recognize the ultimate source of existence. We will really appreciate G-d's role in our lives. But, even before we realize that goal, we must try to develop the sense of appreciation period.

By way of analogy: before one could use an instrument to perform a certain function, one must first check to see whether the instrument is in working order.

The instrument we need for Moshiach is acknowledging what goes on in our lives. Acknowledgement leads to appreciation.

When we cease to take things for granted and appreciate everything that we have and all that occurs in our life we can then say that our "instrument" is in functioning order. At that point we then get to use the instrument for its intended and ultimate purpose: recognizing the all-encompassing role G-d plays in our own lives.

This is what preparing for Moshiach entails. Opening our eyes to see what is going on around us. We cannot be oblivious to the cataclysmic events that have occurred, nor should we ignore the more subtle changes that are happening. To become sensitive to all that is going on will help us in achieving our own Exodus from exile into the world of Redemption.

HOT AND COLD

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Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

Get out of your own Mitzraim-Egypt

Of all the Biblical experiences, the one that Judaism requires us to remember on a daily basis is the Exodus from Egypt.

Mitzraim, the Hebrew name for Egypt, our sages tell us, is not only the name of a country; it is also a description of a state of mind that inhibits our potential for spiritual growth. *Mitzraim* cognate to the word *Meitzarim* (straits) is a reference to the constraints imposed on our soul by our bodies, physical needs, and environment.

When we feel that we are in a rut, when we stagnate, it is a symptom of the *Mitzraim* syndrome we all suffer from in exile. And it is this dimension of *Mitzraim* that we are enjoined by the Torah to get out of every day.

For guidance as to how precisely we can accomplish this modern day liberation, we can turn to the ten plagues—the instruments G-d used to free the Israelites from ancient Egyptian bondage—and apply them to our own personal *Mitzraim*.

The symbolism of water and blood

The first two plagues both involved the Nile River. The first one converted its waters to blood, while in the second one; the frogs emerged from the Nile River and spread through all of Egypt—even into the fiery ovens of the Egyptians.

As we discussed in the earlier essay (The Ten Plagues 1), the ten plagues were more than just ways of punishing the Egyptians. They were primarily tools to educate the Egyptians

as well as the Jews as to G-d's greatness. Rashi, for example, informs us that before G-d destroys a nation, He first destroys their idols. By striking the Nile, G-d destroyed their greatest idol and source of their evil ways.

Similarly, the plagues have much to offer us in the form of guidance and enlightenment on our path towards Redemption:

Water, being cold, represents the coldness we often exhibit towards matters of the spirit. Blood, on the other hand, stands for life, enthusiasm and the passion we possess. The plague of blood thus symbolizes the conversion of icy indifference (regarding matters of holiness) into warmth and excitement.

A Living People

A Jew is a member of a living people, the Torah says, because we cleave to the living G-d. A Jew's existence is characterized by his/her passion for true life, which is anything connected to and associated with G-d. When we find ourselves in exile, in modern

day *Mitzriam's*, we discover that we no longer have the same passion for Torah and Mitzvot.

Our first step in the process of Redemption thus is to search for the fire and flame within our souls that has to be fanned into a roaring fire, until we can consciously feel the passion for G-d and G-dly pursuits.

Stay Cool

Step number one is followed by step number two. It is not enough to instill life into our spiritual existence, but we must also look for ways to cool down the enthusiasm and obsession we have for materialism.

The Virtue of Indifference

To be sure, the Torah does not want us to negate the physical world. G-d's objective in creating the physical world was for us to elevate it and refine it. But, the only way we can accomplish the goal of bringing holiness into the physical is to cool down our ardor for the material aspects of existence. By

accentuating the spiritual dimension of everything, while engaged in physical activities, we have the capacity to bring sanctity into them.

This second step towards Redemption is symbolized by the second plague of frogs. The cold-blooded frogs that originated in the cold waters of the Nile River represent the detachment and coldness we must bring into our material concerns. There is a time when indifference can be a virtue; when we remain cool and collected in the presence of people whose passions are misplaced. The frogs even jumped into the ovens—to teach us to cool down the passion of Egyptian life—our obsession with materialism.

Altering our Mindset

As we approach the Final Redemption, we must realize that the way to redemption must follow the example of the Exodus from Egypt, as the prophet says: "As in the days that you left Egypt, I will show you wonders."

The first two steps are to instill passion in spiritual matters and to reduce our love for materialism.

But, this is more easily said than done. How does one make a 180-degree turnaround? With the way our society is so immersed in materialism and its lack of enthusiasm for spiritual matters, how do we accomplish such a dramatic reversal of our priorities and personalities?

While there can be several non-conventional ways of changing, such as personal or universal crises that can force us to take stock of our lives, we would all prefer a more calm and predictable means to change. Cataclysmic events such as the recent catastrophic attack of the World Trade Center on 9/11, jolted many people into a reorientation of their priorities in life. However, there is a more peaceful and straightforward way to change.

Saturating our Brains

It is through Torah study.

When we saturate our brains with the Divine knowledge, particularly the Torah teachings concerning the Redemption and the Messianic Age, it has the effect of changing our mindsets. When we finally ignite our passion for Torah and become somewhat desensitized to gross materialism, we then become prepared for the ultimate world of Redemption that will be characterized by a thirst and passion for G-d. At that time, despite the proliferation of all material goods, they will not dampen our love for G-d and His Torah.

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THE FROG

THE FROG

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

One Frog

The second of the ten plagues G-d brought onto the Egyptians was the plague of "frogs." Upon striking of the Nile, the frogs emerged from the Nile and "covered the Land of Egypt."

Rashi, the principle Bible commentator, notes that the Torah employs the singular word for frog-*tzefardeah*, rather then the plural "*tzefardim*." Rashi's simple explanation for this anomaly is that the word really does not mean frog, but the swarming of the frog species.

Rashi's preferred explanation, however, is the one he cites from the Midrash. In fact, the Midrash states, there was only one frog that emerged from the Nile. When the Egyptians saw this one frog emerge they began to strike it, whereupon "streams" of frogs came out of the frog that swarmed throughout the Land of Egypt.

The Midrash is not a book of fanciful legends. It contains traditions that were handed down through the generations. But, the Midrash is even more than just oral traditions that provide us with greater detail with regard to Biblical narratives and laws. The Midrash was intended, among other objectives, to teach us spiritual and moral lessons, by focusing on certain anomalies in the Biblical text.

With this introduction in mind, the question begs to be asked: What moral and spiritual lesson can we derive from the fact that there was actually only one frog, from which multitudinous frogs were generated, when the Egyptians struck that lone frog?

The Ten Plagues were not just ways of punishing the Egyptians or motivating them to set the Jews free. The plagues were also, if not primarily, intended to teach the Egyptians and us certain theological and moral lessons. For the entire story of the Exodus is more than just an historical saga; it is the story of our own soul's quest for freedom.

The plague of the frogs was intended to discredit their belief in false gods. The Nile river was worshipped by Egypt and by having the river turn into blood (the first plague) and then become the source of disgusting frogs pervading every one's life, the Nile was thoroughly discredited as a true deity.

Why Two-Nile Plagues?

But, the question remains, why was there a need for two plagues to strike the Nile? What did the second plague contribute to their understanding of theology? Contrary to the view of some anthropologists and historians, the Egyptians were not monotheists. Our Sages, based on explicit Biblical texts, tell us

that they worshipped the Nile, lambs, Ba'al Tzephon and Pharaoh himself, among other deities. The mindset of the pagan culture of ancient Egypt was that there were multiple forces that were responsible for the events and conditions of life.

Monotheism was Radical

The notion of unity promoted by Judaism was the most radical departure from the pagan mindset. This explains why Pharaoh says to Moses "Who is G-d that I should listen to His voice and let Israel out? I do not know of G-d, nor will I let Israel out!"

Why would a man who was well aware of the existence of so many gods find it so difficult to believe that there might be another god somewhere? In truth, if Moses would have used the plural name for G-d "Elo-him," that connotes that G-d is the source of and manifests Himself within natural forces, he would have not been so averse to recognizing His existence. But he did take exception to the name of G-d employed by Moses that

denotes absolute unity and transcendence over all existence.

By having the lone frog emerge from the water, G-d's intention was to dramatize the idea that multiple creatures can all come from one solitary source. And that it is man's actions—symbolized by the striking of the frog—that produces multiplicity. If we would trace everything in this world to its source, we would realize that there is but one, absolutely one, source to everything. Any appearance of plurality in our source of life is but an illusion created by our doing.

Application to Modern Times

What this says to modern people is that while we may not worship the Nile or any of the natural forces the way the ancients did, we also find ways of seeing multiple sources for our existence. An illustration of this is when G-d is deemed to be a benevolent force that does not have control over all of existence; we are essentially stating that there are other parallel sources to existence. We are paraphrasing Pharaoh who said "I do not

know [the exclusive] G-d; [the one source of everything]."

The plague of frogs provides us with a simple repudiation of that mindset, by demonstrating how the notion of multifarious forces is one that we create. But even that mindset comes from G-d. G-d, the true source of everything, gives us the ability to see division where there is unity. This He does so that we have the challenge to search for and discover unity, within the diversity.

Explosion of Unity

Our mission is to search for the not so common, Common source. And as we get closer to the Messianic Age when G-d's exclusivity will become fully accepted by the entire world, we see how the notion of unity is dominating all areas of life. Only in the area of human relationships are we seriously lagging behind. In virtually every sphere—communications, transfer of information and science—unity is the name of the game. Our work is cut out for us to recognize the absolute Divine unity that pervades all of

existence; the realization of which will unify all of humankind as well.

DIVINE MICRO-MANAGEMENT

DIVINE MICRO-MANAGEMENT

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

The "Finger of G-d"

It is axiomatic in Judaism that G-d does not punish people for the sake of punishment. The Ten Plagues, although characterized as punishment, was first and foremost a means of education the Egyptians and us about G-d and His relationship with us.

This fact is mentioned explicitly in the Torah. When G-d tells Moses about the plagues He states that through these plagues "they will know that I am G-d."

Additional proof of this approach, if needed can be adduced from the fact that there were Ten Plagues. It is obvious that had G-d wanted it so that Pharaoh could have been "convinced" that it was in his own best interest to let the Jews go after the first plague. Why was there a need for all ten?

Commentators point out, as was discussed in preceding essays, that each plague served an educational objective as well as a form of punishment and a means of coercion.

Lice are Nice

In this essay we will focus on the third plague, referred to in Hebrew as *Kinnim* or lice. What was unique about this plague in terms of the effect it had on the Egyptians?

Upon closer scrutiny it is clear that this plague was the first to impress the Egyptian sorcerers that this was not magic, but it was, in their words: "the finger of G-d." Considering that these pagans did not even know of G-d's existence previously as Pharaoh exclaimed earlier: "I don't know G-d

that I should hearken to his voice!" their admission now that this was an expression of His power, represented a major change in their attitude.

The Talmud—cited by Rashi—explains why they were impressed with the plague of lice more than the two earlier ones of blood and frogs. Whereas their powers of magic extended to larger forms, they were impotent insofar as creatures that were smaller than a "barley grain." When these sorcerers saw that G-d did not have that limitation and he was able to produce even lice that were smaller than a barley grain, they were convinced that G-d's power exceeded theirs.

Big is Small and Small is Big

Upon deeper reflection it would seem that the admission that G-d's power that wrought this plague was greater than the power of magic was more than just in a quantitative sense. To suggest that G-d's preeminence over the sorcerers of Egypt was limited to the size of the object they wished to create is

hardly an educational "coup" and victory for the forces of holiness.

In truth, their perception that their powers did not extend to miniscule things, derived from their limited notion of what a deity is. For them, a great power could not relate to anything less than a power that is virtually as great. A mighty monarch would never lower himself to deal with the lowliest subjects of his kingdom. To reach them, he must delegate responsibility to lower level officials.

This was, in essence, the very origin of paganism. According to Maimonides, as explained in Chassidic literature, the original pagans believed in G-d, but they also believed that it was beneath His dignity to deal with the lowly affairs of our physical world. G-d, they reasoned, must have delegated power and responsibility to lower deities such as the sun, moon and other celestial bodies.

When the sorcerers saw that G-d could indeed relate to the most miniscule and insignificant creatures, it introduced them to the truth about G-d's ability to relate to the

greatest and the lowliest equally. Only a finite king can be more partial to a higher level of power and indifferent to lower levels. G-d who is truly infinite can relate to even the most insignificant being. In short, G-d is no closer to a more important creature and no more distant from the most inconsequential one. Everything in relation to G-d is equal, equally unimportant, or—if G-d so desires—equally important.

Details do Count

This lesson forms the basis of Judaism as well.

Most of the Torah is filled with G-dly commands that dictate to us how we should think, talk and act.

Many ask the question, why would such an omnipotent G-d be concerned with such "trivial" matters as the food we eat, the words we speak etc.? Wouldn't G-d get more out of the more spiritually glamorous experiences than with the minute details of our everyday lives? Doesn't G-d care more

about how we treat our fellow human being than some minor detail of a ritual?

In truth, the answer is, because G-d is absolutely infinite, He can relate to anything without it affecting His greatness. The more trivial the action that we do for G-d, the more it expresses the "finger of G-d." The more it demonstrates that G-d is truly infinite, before whom the most insignificant act can be endowed with cosmic importance.

Save the World

With this in mind, we can better appreciate Maimonides' statement that even one positive action can save the entire world. To ensure the future of the world, the ultimate age of Redemption, one does not have to necessarily perform some earth shattering gesture. One minor act of kindness and goodness, one more Mezuzah on our doorposts, one more dollar to tzedakah, just one Shabbat observed, can be the one act that will transform the entire world.

And just as the recognition of the Egyptian elite that the Jewish G-d can be expressed through the most miniscule action was a major step in preparing the Jewish nation for their redemption from Egyptian bondage, so too, in our day and age, the recognition that **every** Mitzvah counts, will usher in the future Redemption through the coming of Moshiach.

Moreover, when we show our reverence for even one act performed that is ordained by G-d we demonstrate that we are aware of the true infinite nature of G-d. That itself is the beginning of the process of Redemption when G-d's true infinite nature will be fully revealed within our finite world.

A LINE ON THE WALL

A LINE ON THE WALL

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

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The Plague of Hail

At the end of this week's parsha, we read of the seventh plague administered to Egypt; the plague of hail.

There is something peculiar about the way this seventh plague was introduced to Pharaoh. This is how the Torah describes the way G-d asked Moses to warn Pharaoh:

"If you still tread upon My people, not sending them out, then I am going to rain down a very heavy hail at this time tomorrow, the likes of which has never

occurred in Egypt from the day it was founded until now."

What did G-d mean when He said: "At this time?"

Rashi explains that Moses scratched a line on the wall for Pharaoh, and said, "Tomorrow, when the sun reaches this point, the hail will come down."

The question has been asked, why was it necessary for Moses to scratch a line on the wall? Would it make that much of a difference if Moses had simply told Pharaoh that tomorrow the hail will fall? Why did he have to be so precise?

Combining Opposites

The answer to this question lies in the uniqueness of the seventh plague, the last one mentioned in this week's parsha (the remaining three are discussed in next week's parsha).

This plague expressed the ultimate power of G-d to combine opposites. This expressed itself in several ways:

First, the hail consisted of both ice and fire!

Second, this plague of hail was the harshest of all the six preceding plagues and was a dramatic expression of G-d's attribute of justice. Yet, simultaneously, this is the only plague in which G-d provided a way for people to escape. Immediately after G-d asks Moses to tell the Egyptians that this hail will be unprecedented, He continues: "Now send, gather in your livestock and all that you have in the field." This plague of hail was simultaneously an expression of G-d's harshest judgment and G-d's attribute of mercy.

This explains why there was a need to indicate the precise time of the plague. The name of G-d that is used throughout the Ten Plagues is the most essential name, known as the Tetragrammaton (The Four Lettered Name), or *Havaye* in Hebrew (the letters of the name rearranged so as not to unlawfully pronounce the name). This is the name Moses used in introducing the G-d of Israel to Pharaoh, and this is the name about which Pharaoh declared "I do not know G-d;" referring to the name Havaye.

This four lettered name is an anagram for the Hebrew words that represent all the three tenses: *haya* (was), *hoveh* (is) and *yihye* (will be).

In other words, this name of G-d represents the aspect of G-d that transcends the parameters of time and was the dynamic force behind this plague as well as all the others. And yet, this plague occurred at a precise time. It combined G-d's timelessness and time.

Humans-Multidimensional Creatures

Kabbalistic and Chassidic teaching maintains that the plagues were not just punishment for the Egyptians. They were also spiritual energies that conditioned the Israelites to get out of their own spiritual bondage as a prelude to their physical liberation.

One of the conditions associated with slavery is the drudgery and single dimension of life.

One of the things that distinguish a human being from an animal is that a human being is, by nature, a multi-dimensional and multi-

faceted creature. An animal is incapable of changing and altering its focus and direction. It is, in a sense, a slave to its one directional instinct of survival. A human being, by contrast, can break out of its mold and transform itself from a judgmental authority figure into a benevolent individual.

Thus a person who is incapable of changing his or her routine—emotionally, mentally, spiritually or physically—loses a chunk of their humanity and reduced to the level of an animal in one important respect.

Part of the liberation process required that the Israelites be exposed to the Divine energy that combines two opposites and when revealed transforms the enslaved individual into a truly free soul.

Multi-Tasking: Preparation for Moshiach

Living today on the threshold of the Redemption through Moshiach, we must reintroduce the positive spiritual dynamics of the Ten Plagues as a way of preparing ourselves for the imminent Redemption.

Translated the plague of hail into practical terms, we must learn to become multi-dimensional in our human and spiritual endeavors. We must combine intense intellectual study of Torah with practical deeds suffused with heartfelt emotion.

Whereas in the days of old, there were those people whose lives were devoted to one area of Jewish expression, today, as we prepare for the dynamic period of the future Messianic Age, we must all become eclectic. While we must resist dilettantism, we must learn to combine the best of all the worlds of goodness, because we are closer to the time when the name of G-d—*Havaye*—will become completely revealed, in the light of which, we can all combine opposites.

THE EXPLOSION

THE EXPLOSION

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

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Couldn't See the Earth

The eighth plague, the locusts, was arguably the most devastating plague of all, after the plague of the firstborn. When an agrarian society has its crops consumed by locusts it faces mass starvation with deadly results. No other plague had the potential to wipe out as many people as this one.

When Moses warned Pharaoh of this impending plague he described it thus:

"For if you refuse to let them go, then tomorrow I am going to bring a swarm of locusts into your border. It will obscure the view of the earth and no one will be able to see the earth." This translation follows the commentaries of Rashi and Ibn Ezra, who explain that the words "no one will be able to see the earth" refers to the people.

However, the classic commentator, *Kli Yakar*, reads a deeper meaning into this text, actually translating it more literally. When one reads this verse in the original Hebrew, its literal rendition yields a very different result: The locusts themselves will not be able to see the earth they are consuming!

This translation, when taken at face value, appears to be bizarre. One can easily convey the devastating nature of the plague by stating that no person would be able to see the earth because it would be covered with locusts. This clearly describes the magnitude of the plague. However, what value is there in the knowledge that the locusts couldn't see

the earth? How does that add to our understanding of the plague?

Kli Yakar's answer is that when people cannot see the food they are consuming their hunger will not be satisfied. This premise is based on the Biblical description of the Manna as food of affliction. No matter how nourishing the Divine food was, the people who consumed it remained hungry. The Talmud explains that when we cannot see what we are eating, we do not feel satiated. This is also one of the reasons we light the candles for Shabbos. One of the commandments associated with Shabbos is to enjoy it by eating special Shabbos food. We cannot fully appreciate and enjoy the food in the dark.

Based on this premise, the *Kli Yakar* concludes that the locust's inability to see the earth they were consuming actually magnified the effects of the plague. Due to their blindness they would devour the vegetation of Egypt ravenously. They would leave nothing, since no matter how much they ate they would not be sated. Because they would not be satisfied with what they ate outdoors,

they would even enter the houses to find food there.

That is all well and good, but we must still probe for the deeper significance of the locusts not being able to see the earth and how it can apply to our understanding of the process of the Exodus.

Ten Plagues: Ten Lessons

The Ten Plagues were not just punishment for Pharaoh and the Egyptian people for their cruel enslavement of the children of Israel. The Ten Plagues were also intended to shatter the wall that separated the reality of G-d's existence and the distorted view of reality held by Egyptian culture. The Ten Plagues were intended to impress upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians of G-d's abiding love for the Jewish people, whom He characterized as "My first born son."

In truth, the Ten Plagues were also intended for the Jewish people, to prepare them for

their Exodus and for the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Moreover, these Ten Plagues have something to teach us as well. When we probe beneath their surface we will discover a message that will prepare us for our liberation from Exile. It will do so by removing the obstructions that exist between G-d's reality and our exile-tainted and distorted perception of reality.

In light of the above, we must try to understand what we can learn from the plague of locusts, particularly from the fact that the locusts themselves were blinded and could not see the earth they were eating from.

Locusts: Extraordinary Blessings?

The word for locust in Hebrew is *arbeh.* This word can also be found in the Torah in several of G-d's blessings as in, "I will multiply your seed." The very word that represents one of nature's greatest curses, threatening the very lifeblood of a country, is

also the word that speaks of extraordinary proliferation of life.

Moreover, the word *arbeh* has the same numerical value as *Yitzchak*, the second Patriarch.

What is the connection between Yitzchak and proliferation? Isn't Yitzchak associated with the trait of Gevurah, which means judgment, constriction and restriction? One would imagine *gevurah* is the very opposite of proliferation and growth

The Rebbe (*Toras Menachem* 5742) sheds light on this matter by referring to a Talmudic statement (*Shabbos* 89b) that in the Messianic Era, we will refer to Yitzchak, exclusively, as our father.

At first glance, this seems rather strange inasmuch as we always refer to all three Patriarchs as our fathers.

Furthermore, the Talmud describes Yitzchak as the one who will defend the Jewish nation while Abraham and Jacob will not! This too is rather counterintuitive in light of the fact

that Abraham personifies the attribute of kindness and Jacob embodies the trait of compassion. Yet, it is Isaac, who represents the attribute of *gevurah*-judgment who will mount the most strident defense of even the most recalcitrant Jews!

The answer lies in the paradoxical nature of *gevura*h. On the one hand, it limits the flow of *chesed*-kindness. On the other hand, *gevurah* actually means strength. A *gevurah* personality, in fact, uses extraordinary powers to restrict and discipline himself precisely because he is strong. When, however, there is a need to unleash unbridled fountains of Divine energy, the Yitzchak/*gevurah* personality generates and releases far more potent forces of kindness than his *chesed* counterpart.

A simple analogy illustrates this point. *Gevurah* relative to the flow of *chesed* is what a dam is relative to the flow of a river. Initially, it blocks the full force of the river and allows only as much water as is desired to trickle through the obstruction. However, when enough water accumulates it pushes

the dam aside and an extraordinary torrent of water is unleashed that carries an exponentially greater volume along with the dam itself. Such is the power of *gevurah*.

Breaking through all of the Obstructions

In the Messianic Age, the Rebbe explains, we will not just be the beneficiaries of the conventional kindness and compassion that are associated with Abraham and Jacob. Rather the full force of Divine beneficence will break through all the obstructions that are the product of our shortcomings and the stifling and inhibiting influence of Galus.

Thus, in the Messianic Age, it will be the Yitzchak's power, specifically, that will remove all the obstacles and allow the proliferation of positive energy to cover the earth with a spiritual sea.

The Plague of Locusts Revisited

We can now return to the plague of locust-*arbeh*. While this plague attacked the agricultural infrastructure of Egypt in the most physical sense it also unleashed the potential for the positive power of *arbeh* to enter the world.

We can now reinterpret the verse which describes the way the locusts covered the earth. One can draw a parallel between this covering of the earth and the one described in Isaiah, "And the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea."

But, how do we apply the part of the locusts themselves not being able to see the earth which, as the *Kli Yakar* explained provoked their ravenous appetite.

As was mentioned above, when the obstructive nature of the dam-gevurah causes the water to accumulate, not only does it ultimately break through the obstruction with incredible force, it takes the dam with it.

Similarly, when the dynamic of Geulah-Redemption is ready to unfold, as it is today,

not only does it unleash extraordinary force, it also takes the dam with it. The obstruction itself first causes the intense power to develop and then it becomes a part of the unprecedented flow.

When this occurs, even the heretofore negative features of Galus can no longer "see the earth." All humanity then develops a ravenous thirst and hunger for G-dliness. We consume every bit of G-dly awareness that can be accessed outside in the "field." This means that we see G-dliness in every blade of grass and everything that exists regardless of its corporeal nature.

The Age of Arbeh

However, the *arbeh*'s appetite is not satisfied. We then look for more overt G-dly expression in the "**houses** of the Egyptians." This is an allusion to the Bais Hamikdash, the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, which will be built with the efforts that we made here in the Diaspora to create miniature Sanctuaries in our synagogues, Houses of Torah Study and our

own homes. These Sanctuaries, the Talmud relates, will be reestablished in Jerusalem and attached to the Bais Hamikdash! There will be an explosion of G-dly knowledge and awareness that will mirror the physical delights that will proliferate in the Messianic Age.

How does one prepare for this age of unprecedented goodness?

When we whet our appetite to learn more of Torah and never quench our thirst or satisfy our hunger, we prepare for the age of unlimited knowledge. This is especially true when we study the spiritual dimension of Torah, which focuses on revealing the Divine in the physical world and to see things from a Divine perspective which doesn't see the Earth with an existence independent of G-d..

Our generation has been inundated by an unprecedented explosion of Torah knowledge. We have already been given a taste of what is to come. Let us plunge into this sea of knowledge and with that experience prepare ourselves for the ultimate and imminent Age of Arbeh.

FREE AND RICH

FREE AND RICH

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

The Enigma of the Plague of Darkness

Of all the Ten Plagues, the most enigmatic is the ninth plague, the plague of darkness. If one is to assume that the plagues were getting progressively more painful, the ninth plague seems to be out of order. The eighth plague of locust destroyed their entire food supply, which would lead to mass starvation. Likewise many of the earlier plagues were life threatening or destructive to their infrastructure. The plague of darkness, by contrast, caused only fear and anxiety. Why then was this plague reserved for next to the last?

Rashi seemed to have anticipated this question. Rashi explains that this plague served two functions. First, during the plague of darkness the Israelites were able to survey all of the Egyptian's possessions. When they asked the Egyptians to give them their gold, silver and clothing, as per G-d's request to them that they do so, the Egyptians denied they had anything to give. Thereupon, the Israelites stated that they saw their possessions and knew where they were hidden.

The second reason for the plague of darkness, Rashi explains, was to facilitate the burial of those Jews who refused to leave Egypt and died out in the plague of darkness, so as to conceal this tragedy from the Egyptians.

The Difficulties

Both explanations raise some serious questions. First, why did those Jews who refused to be liberated have to die? Why was their reluctance to leave so serious a crime as to deserve death? Why couldn't they just be

left behind to remain subservient to the Egyptians?

As for the first explanation, the question that can be raised is: why was it so important for the Israelites to see the treasures of Egypt during this plague of darkness? Surely, if G-d wanted them to leave with the wealth of Egypt they deserved as payment for their decades of slavery and torture, G-d could have found other ways of inducing the Egyptians to give then the wealth. Why did it have to come through the Israelites seeing this wealth during the plague of darkness?

Discovering Their Identity

The answer to both of these questions is the suggestion that with this plague of darkness G-d wanted not just to punish the Egyptians, but also to educate the Jewish people about their identity and role, and how they should view exile and liberation.

The reason the Israelites that refused to be liberated died in the plague of darkness one may suggest was not a punishment but a consequence of who they were. A Jew, from

the time of the Exodus onward, says the Maharal (the great 16th century Talmudist, Kabbalist and leader), became an inherently free person. A Jew cannot be truly subservient to others. It goes against his or her very nature and essence. For a Jew to thrust himself into slavery once the dynamic energy of the Exodus began to be generated was a self-destructive act. Those Jews simply couldn't survive as slaves.

No Other Masters

This was the first message we were given at the time of our liberation. A Jew must know that he or she is essentially a free person whose existence is one that belongs to G-d alone. A Jew cannot tolerate any other master. To be sure, Jews were subjected to many subsequent periods of exile and servitude. But the message conveyed at the time of the Exodus was that a Jew should and could never make peace with being in exile. His or her essence is freedom. And we are given only one choice either to be free as Jews or to cease to exist.

To translate this message into practical terms it instructs us as to our attitude towards our being in exile and our hopes for the imminent Redemption through Moshiach. A Jew has to realize that Moshiach and Redemption is real and is his or her true state, whereas exile is the facade and the temporary state.

Gathering the Treasures

But there is an even deeper message that the other explanation for the plague of darkness conveys.

We were told to survey the Egyptian homes to find all of their treasures as a prelude to receiving them from the Egyptians. This means that even as we are still in exile and are eagerly anticipating the future liberation, we must know that freedom is not just the absence of slavery and suffering. Freedom, in the ultimate sense of the word, is when we gather the treasures—material and spiritual—that we generated in exile through our hard work, acts of Mitzvot, Torah study and heartfelt prayers and take it with us into

the period of Redemption. Not only can we not stay behind; even these treasures we do not leave behind.

Not only is it important for us to know that we are inherently free people and that we have only one true Master, but that freedom is a patently positive and exciting experience, even if when we are in exile there is no longer any suffering. We yearn for Moshiach and Redemption because of the positive experience—the treasures—it will bring just as much as we yearn for the cessation of pain and suffering in exile.

SEEING THE LIGHT

SEEING THE LIGHT

These are the Ten Plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians, namely as follows:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Beasts. Pestilence. Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Slaying of the First-born.

The "Sandwiched" Plague

Of all the ten plagues that G-d brought upon the Egyptians, the plague of darkness is clearly the most enigmatic. Besides the obvious fright that overcame the Egyptians, the plague of darkness did not seem to have the same effect of all the other plagues.

All the other plagues either destroyed Egyptian resources (blood destroyed the Nile, their water supply, pestilence killed their livestock, hail destroyed plants, livestock and people, locusts destroyed most of their food supply) that were crucial to life, or caused

bodily harm (frogs, lice, mixture of wild animals, boils, plague of the first born).

Furthermore, as the plagues progressed the harm that was caused by them also seemed to increase. (The last two plagues: hail and locusts were life threatening as was the last plague of the firstborn.) "Sandwiched" in between these deadly plagues was the one of darkness that appeared to have been the least harmful of all.

In short, what purpose was served by the plague of darkness?

Darkness the Ultimate Form of Enlightenment

One explanation that will shed light (pun intended) on the plague of darkness views this plague as the ultimate enlightening experience and was therefore an integral part of the process of the Exodus from Egypt.

There are two forms and sources of darkness. One derives from the **absence** of light. The other comes from **excessive** generation of light. When a very bright light is shined into

someone's eyes, he can become blinded. Looking directly into the sun—the most powerful light source to reach the Earth—can become the most darkening experience. (It is also interesting to note that the Talmud calls a blind person a "*sagi nahor*." literally, one who has [too] **much light**.)

It can therefore be suggested that the plague of darkness was not caused by an absence of light, but by an abundance of it. And as will be explained, this served to underscore the very purpose of the Exodus.

A Foretaste of the Light of Sinai

In asking Pharaoh to let the Jews out of Egypt, Moses underscored the fact that the purpose of the Exodus would be to serve G-d. G-d himself said the same thing to Moses at the Burning Bush. Chassidic thought describes the Exodus as much more than just an escape to freedom from physical oppression—it was an intensely spiritual revelation that was a precursor to the even greater revelation of G-d that would happen at Mount Sinai.

As a preparation for the revelation of the exodus and the Sinai experience, G-d gave the Jews a foretaste of the Divine light that they would experience on the last night in Egypt and beyond through Sinai. But this light was so powerful that it overwhelmed the depraved Egyptians and temporarily blinded them.

We can now appreciate the purpose of the ninth plague. As we mentioned in several of the preceding essays, in addition to punishing the Egyptians, the plagues were meant to educate them. Each plague introduced them to another of G-d's attributes. The plague of darkness showed them that there are aspects of G-d's light that are so great—they are (at least temporarily)—totally beyond their grasp. In a manner of speaking, the ninth plague showed the Egyptians that there was a level of G-dliness that left them totally in the dark.

A Light to the Nations

At the same time, they learned that the Jewish nation **was** able to accept this G-dly

revelation and grow with it. They learned, during the plague of darkness, that G-d was forming a nation that would be receptive to G-d's light, so that they can serve as a "light unto the nations"—introduce this light to the rest of the world. Accordingly, it taught the nations of the world that by helping the Jewish people to absorb this light—by way of Torah study and fulfillment of its precepts—they will also acquire the ability to absorb this powerful G-dly light.

With the coming of Moshiach, the light generated at the plague of darkness, will be generated once more. But, this time, it will be permanent and the entire world will be capable of absorbing it. As the prophet declares: "**All the nations** shall walk in Your light." At that time no one will be left in the dark.

ALL DRESSED UP AND READY TO GO

PESACH MATZAH AND MAROR

ALL DRESSED UP AND READY TO GO

PESACH MATZAH AND MAROR

Passover - the Passover-lamb that our fathers ate during the time of the Beit Hamikdash - for what reason [did they do so]?

Because the Omnipresent passed over our fathers' houses in Egypt, as it is said:

"You shall say, It is a Passover-offering to the L-rd, because He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians with a plague, and He saved our houses. And the people bowed and prostrated themselves."

This Matzah that we eat for what reason? Because the dough of our fathers did not have time to become leavened before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One,

blessed be He, revealed Himself to them and redeemed them.

Thus it is said: "They baked Matzah-cakes from the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, because it was not leavened; for they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay, and they had also not prepared any [other] provisions."

This maror that we eat for what reason? Because the Egyptians embittered our fathers' lives in Egypt, as it is said:

"They made their lives bitter with hard service, with mortar and with bricks, and with all manner of service in the field; all their service which they made them serve with rigor."

Blood, Sweat and Tears

The Jewish people have already been told that they will be liberated from Egypt. Nine of the ten plagues have already been dealt. The Egyptian people are at their wit's end.

At this point, the Torah, in the portion of *Bo* continues, that G-d tells Moses to command

the Jewish people to take a lamb and tie it to their beds on the tenth of the month. They were to keep them there, ready for the fourteenth day of the month when they will sacrifice the lamb to G-d.

In addition, they were told that only those who were circumcised would be permitted to partake of the Paschal Lamb offering.

These two Mitzvot—the Passover lamb sacrifice and circumcision—our sages tell us were given to the Jewish people at precisely this time—right before their exodus—for a good reason.

Rashi quotes the Talmudic sage, Rabbi *Matya ben Charash* who puts it this way:

"The time had come for Me to keep My oath that I had made to the patriarchs, that I will redeem their children. Alas, they did not have any Mitzvot in their hands with which to be preoccupied, so that they may be redeemed, as it says, 'And you were naked and bare [of Mitzvot].' He, therefore, gave them then two precepts, the blood of the Paschal sacrifice and the blood of circumcision."

The long arduous exile that was punctuated with sweat and tears, was to culminate with blood; the blood of the Paschal sacrifice and the blood of circumcision.

Why these Two Mitzvot?

The question may be asked. There are so many Mitzvot G-d could have given them. Why did He choose these two specifically?

Secondly, why did He have to give them two *mitzvot*? Even if they had observed one mitzvah they would no longer have been considered "naked," from the spiritual point of view. Could not one Mitzvah be considered a valid garment?

Removal of Two Impediments to Redemption

The Jewish people in Egypt were lacking two distinct qualities. They were firstly lacking in positive actions and were therefore ill prepared for the pro-active form of service to G-d that Sinai would have demanded of them.

Secondly, there were deficient in their ability to distance themselves from evil. Had they not altered this state of affairs, they would have then left Egypt with their evil intact. With that evil still in their possession they could not have survived as a Jewish people, whose values conform to the Torah.

To remove the two impediments to the Exodus, there was therefore a need for two distinct precepts that paralleled their two shortcomings:

The covenant of circumcision is the most dramatic way one shows one's commitment to G-d and activates one's reservoir of positive energy.

Circumcision is the only Mitzvah that actually leaves its imprint on the person permanently. Consequently, circumcision exemplifies the Jew's unqualified and unconditional devotion to doing that which G-d wants, at all times.

The blood of the Paschal sacrifice, conversely, represented the repudiation of the negative. It was well known that the Egyptians worshipped the lamb as a god. By

slaughtering the lamb and sprinkling its blood, thus, one demonstrated his utter abhorrence for and absolute rejection of evil.

Getting dressed for the occasion

The Torah tells us (and our sages reinforced the belief) that the pre-Messianic times in which we are situated now parallel the pre-Exodus period.

All the reasons that were given for our stay in exile have all since expired. Why has G-d kept us here anyhow?

One answer given is that G-d wants us to enter into the Messianic period "fully and ornately dressed." Rather than just thrust us into a new world of unadulterated goodness and holiness, unprepared, He gives us numerous opportunities to "dress" ourselves, with yet another mitzvah. Every mitzvah we do now will make us more comfortable with and receptive to the G-dly light that will shine in the Messianic Age.

However, the fact that we are fully dressed in the spiritual sense of the word does not

suffice. We have an obligation to see to it that not one Jew remains in an unprepared state. And if we have specialized and excelled in one category of Mitzvot, it may not suffice. The A-mighty might want us to be fully dressed to cover up all of our inadequacies.

Every new Mitzvah to which we apply ourselves and every Mitzvah we provide for another Jew might be the final mitzvah that was needed for the A-mighty to say, "*s'iz shoin genug*-it is already enough" There is no need to keep you here longer because every Jew is adequately "dressed" for the coming of Moshiach.

FINALLY FREE

FINALLY FREE

In every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt, as it is said: "You shall tell your child on that day, it is because of this that the L-rd did for me when I left Egypt."

The Obsession with the Exodus

Remembering the Exodus is A Biblical commandment. We are obligated to remember the Exodus every day and every night. Many of the rituals of Judaism—from the Passover Seder to the laws against usury and false weights and measures—are associated with the Exodus, in one form or another.

So important was the Exodus that the Ten Commandments begins with G-d "introducing" Himself as the One who took the Jewish People out of the land of Egypt, from the House of Bondage.

Granted that freedom from slavery is a major part of our history; granted that without freedom there would not be a Jewish nation, but why the obsession with the Exodus?

To remember the Exodus one night a year at the *seder* would make sense, but why are we obligated to remember the Exodus each and every day and night? Why do we need so many tangible reminders of this historical event?

Going out of Egypt Daily

Our Sages were anticipating this question when they stated in the Mishnah and the *Haggadah*, "In each and every generation one must view oneself as if he just left Egypt." The Exodus is not an event of the past, but an ongoing process. As was explained in previous essays the word *Mitzraim*, Hebrew for Egypt, actually connotes a state of confinement, physical or spiritual.

No matter how much we might have progressed, there is still something that confines, inhibits or limits us. Going out of

Mitzraim then is the process of removing all the impediments to our spiritual progress. As such, our remembrance of the Exodus is not simply remembering an event of the past, but it is an ongoing process. When we realize that the Exodus is a current and continuing event, it makes the remembrance of it far more meaningful and alive.

Are we just Treading Water?

This analysis, however, can also raise a rather troubling question. If this question is not answered it can lead to a sense of frustration and even depression.

The question is actually a whole series of questions: Do we ever realize our goal of true and complete freedom? Do we have to anticipate forever dedicating our lives to fighting the obstacles? Isn't it depressing to be in a constant struggle to be free? Would anyone be happy to fight an incessant war against those who would want to deny our freedom? To preserve our sanity, don't we have to finally be free, once and for all, so we

can focus on the positive areas of growth and not be fixated on defense?

Request for Moshiach

These questions are actually what our prayers, for the Final Redemption and the coming of the Moshiach, are all about.

Why do we ask for the Messianic Age? One good reason is that it will finally allow our quest for true freedom to be fulfilled. At that juncture we will be able to focus our attention on the purely positive elements of life that are the source of true joy and satisfaction.

Growth through Adversity is not the Goal

And while we certainly have developed the ability to grow by virtue of the adversity and threats to freedom that we had to overcome, the ultimate Redemption is one that will show us how we can grow without adversity.

Unfortunately, we have been so conditioned to learn how to thrive on adversity; we tend to forget that the goal is actually the realization of a victory over evil and pain.

Remembering the Exodus in the Messianic Age

With this introduction we can understand the dispute between two sages in the Mishnah, quoted in the Passover Haggadah recited at the *seder*, as to whether we will continue to mention the Exodus from Egypt in the future Messianic Era.

According to the Sages, we will always have to express our gratitude to G-d for the Exodus from Egypt, because without freedom we could never have attained anything, and if not for the original experience of the Exodus that continued for thousands of years, we could never reach the Messianic Age.

According to Ben Zoma, however, and maintain that in the future we will no longer have to think about the past experiences of freedom because, we will have entered into a totally new dimension of existence, one in which positive energy does not have to be generated from the challenge of coping with adversity.

CHAD GADYA

CHAD GADYA

Introduction

One of the hymns sung by many at the end of the Seder is the Chad Gadya hymn, although it is not included in the Chabad version of the Haggadah it is nevertheless considered to be a holy hymn with deep symbolic and spiritual overtones. Some of the greatest sages of the last few centuries have interpreted it in various ways.

The following is an attempt to see the entire hymn as an outline of the things that will bring to the final redemption and the events that will occur after the redemption. Some of the interpretation of the opening few stanza were taken from various commentators.

One kid one kid

The Jewish people have been likened to a kid, a goat or a lamb. They are regarded as "one lamb amongst 70 wolves." This describes their the state of the Jewish people throughout their history; from the time the Torah was given at Mount Sinai. It is especially true of the period of Galus-exile.

The repetition of the phrase is an expression of love and affection as in the verse "Abraham, Abraham." G-d addresses us with love and affection and showers us with his promise that we will survive all of the existential threats and will ultimately be redeemed with the coming of Moshiach.

On a deeper level, the repetition is an expression of the dual nature of the oneness of the Jewish people. Israel is called "one nation on earth." And Israel is the nation that declares G-d's oneness, as the Talmud (*Berachos* 6a) describes the content of G-d's Tefillin: "Who is like your nation Israel, one nation on earth." This parallels the Shema, contained in our Tefillin, which declares G-d's oneness.

This phrase "one kid, one kid" conveys two messages: first, we are a unique nation, G-d's chosen child. Second, we reveal G-d's oneness on this earth. This duality began in earnest at Mount Sinai and will be fully realized in the final redemption.

That Father Bought

This is a reference to G-d who is our father, as we say in our prayers, repeatedly: *Avinu Malkeinu*-our Father; our King. This relationship we had even before we left Egypt, when G-d called us "my first born child" was reinforced by us when we accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai. G-d acquired us as his nation as it says: "this nation you acquired." (Shemos 15:16) see ethics of the fathers 6:10.

With Two Zuzi

G-d acquired us with the Torah. As commentators explain that the Torah itself is divided into two tablets. In addition, the

Torah comprises both the written Torah and the oral Torah.

More specifically, G-d "acquired" us through our acceptance of the Oral Torah. The oral Torah demanded of us much more self-sacrifice. Throughout history, it was the oral Torah that our enemies sought to suppress. And it is our self-sacrifice for the oral Torah that made it ours. Once the Torah is ours, we then become G-d's. This is similar to a purchase as soon as we pay for the item, the item becomes ours. When we acquired the Torah given to us by G-d, we were sold to G-d.

Purim, the Talmud states, was the real acceptance of the Torah because at Sinai G-d placed the mountain over their head and they had to accept the Torah. In the days of Purim, the Jews wholeheartedly embraced the Torah. Thus, in Purim the reference there is to *orah*-the feminine form of light which alludes to the Oral Torah as the Rebbe explained in *Likkutei Sichos* (volume 3 – Purim).

This idea can be found hinted in the gematria: zuzi adds up to 30 and two zuzi is 60, the number of tractates in the Mishnah.

Alternatively, the two zuzi refer to the double expression the Jews used to accept the Torah: "*na'aseh v'nishma*-we will do and we will hear."

Indeed, when Rava studied Torah and was oblivious to blood dripping from his finger a heretic exclaimed: you are part of an impulsive nation that prefaces "we will do" before "we will hear." The term for impulsive nation is *p'ziza*. The word *p'ziza* contains the letters of the word zuzi. The root of both words is *zaz*, to move. Zuz is a form of currency whose value is determined by its circulation. This is related to the idea of impulsiveness, which indicates fast movement.

The plural of zuzi can also be a hint to the two words of *zeh* ("this" masculine) and *zu* ("this" feminine). These are the words that represent the harmonious relationship between husband and wife.

Torah, likewise possess both a masculine part (the Written Torah) and a feminine part (the Oral Torah)

It is noteworthy that the Mezuzah is a composite of these two words zeh and zu and is the source of G-d dwelling in one's home that brings peace between husband and wife.

It may be suggested that the two opinions concerning the positioning of the mezuzah relates to the two parts of Torah. The Written Torah, or the Torah scroll is usually kept in a vertical position in the ark. When it is read it is horizontal. The question is: which is a more dominant aspect of the Mezuzah? The compromise is that we place it diagonally, which combines both approaches contained within Mezuzah, the zeh and the zu.

One might add the two zuzi are an allusion to the description of the pre-Messianic age when we will endure the persistent oppression of the "spoilers and the spoilers after the spoilers." *Kesubos* 112b) The Aramaic word for spoilers is *b'zuzi*.. The state

of the Jewish people in relation to G-d was made more solid as a result of our suffering in exile.

And here we the correlation between the two zuzi, referring to the two parts of Torah and the repetition of "one kid, one kid." As mentioned above, our association with oneness ("one kid, one kid") is a dual one. We are G-d's chosen one, and we have chosen the one G-d and established his oneness in our world.

These two levels of oneness correspond to the two parts of Torah hinted in the words "two zuzi."

Where is G-d's choice of Israel most pronounced? It is in the oral Torah which is off limits to the nations of the world. However, where is G-d's unity revealed and promoted? It is primarily in the written Torah, for that part of Torah is accessible to all the nations of the world.

It should be noted that the gematria of *chad gadya chad gadya* is the same as the repetition of the word zuzi.

One kid one kid

Why does he repeat "one kid one kid?"

Even after we sinned and have alienated ourselves from G-d, we still remain one kid. G-d did not lose his affection for us. The Talmud declares: "Israel, even if he sinned, is still Israel." G-d cannot exchange them for another nation; they always remain G-d's beloved children.

The question here is now: how do we make the transition from the period of exile where G-d's love for us is hidden to the time when it will be on full display?

The answer comes in the next stanza:

And the cat came and ate the kid

> The Aramaic word for cat here is *shunra*. The Talmud (Berachos 57b) states: "If one sees a cat in his dream, he shall anticipate a beautiful song." This is based on reading the word *shunra* as a contraction of *shirah no'eh*- a beautiful song.

This refers to the fact that the Jewish people actually attached themselves to G-d and were worthy of redemption because they sang a beautiful song when they crossed the sea.

Therefore, we are also worthy of redemption from the present, final exile because we too sing joyously in anticipation of our redemption. Unlike the righteous king Hezekiah, who forfeited his role as the messiah because he did not sing praise to G-d for the miracles he experienced.

This then is the deeper meaning of seeing a cat in the dream. The dream is a metaphor for the period of exile. Even in exile we can sing a beautiful song because we have not lost our trust in G-d that he will bring the redemption. And even before the redemption occurs, we are already singing praise. As our sages teach, it is in the merit of our faith and trust in G-d's deliverance that we will be redeemed.

After the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash our sages put restrictions on song and music. The Ba'al Shem Tov, in anticipation of the redemption, reinstated joyous expressions of

song and is now the norm among all segments of Jewry.

What then is the meaning of the cat eating the kid?

Eating is a metaphor for something that is completely enveloped within something else. The cat eating the kid thus means that the beautiful song (shunra) completely envelops us "the kid").

Additionally, it maybe suggested that the metaphor of the cat is suggestive of modesty. As the Talmud (*Eiruvin* 100b) states: "If the Torah had not been given we would learn modesty from a cat."

One of the benefits of modesty is that it leads to redemption as our sages state that it was because of the chastity of the Jewish people in Egypt that they were redeemed.

Perhaps, both interpretations are complementary. When the Jews sang their song, the women sang separately. Even when in a state of joy there was no loss of modesty.

And the dog came and bit the cat

The Talmud (*Beitzah* 25b) declares: "the Jews are the most brazen of the nations and the dog is the most brazen of the beasts." This chutzpah has served the Jewish people well. Although it can be a negative trait; it is this ability to stand up against the forces that try to crush us that enabled us to survive as a nation.

In terms of our future redemption, we are permitted, nay we are obliged, to employ holy chutzpah by demanding "ad masai-how much longer."

The Talmud (*Ta'anis* 23a) relates how Choni Hama'agel used chutzpah to "get" G-d to send down the rain in appropriate and beneficial fashion.

This holy chutzpah has been the hallmark of the greatest Jewish leaders from Moses, through Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, and the Rebbe in our generation.

The meaning of the dog "biting-nashach" is similar to the Talmudic usage of the term, which is to have one thing touch and connect

with another, as in two pieces of dough that "bite each other." While the "beautiful song" in anticipation of the future is desirable (shunra) it must be augmented with pleas to, and demands of, G-d to redeem us.

The stick came and hit the dog

The Aramaic word *chutra* is also used in the messianic prophecy (Isaiah 11:1): "and there shall come forward a shoot (*choter*) out of the stock of Jesse..."

When we employ our childish innocence ("one kid"); our beautiful song of hope, praise and trust (shunra), our holy chutzpah (kalba) we can bring Moshiach.

But why is this process hinted in the word chutra-stick or shoot?

The last prophet Malachi states: and he will restore the hearts of the fathers to the sons." Rashi translates this differently: "he will restore the hearts of the father's through the children." The Midrash uses a stick as a metaphor of the nature of a person is to return to their roots by stating: "throw a

stick into the air it will return to its roots." As the Rebbe would say, repeatedly, "no Jew will be left behind." This contrasts with the first redemption when those who did not want to be part of the Jewish people died in Egypt. However this exile is different.

The Rebbe applied this to the reply we make to the "wicked son": "if you were there you would not be redeemed." The emphasis is on the word "there." Now, we intimate to the wicked son, you have no choice, you will be redeemed. So why fight it!

How does one elicit the holy chutzpah of the dog and the beautiful song of the cat? Through hitting or applying the lesson of the stick. By using harsh words to the wicked son, when all other methods fail, it can crack the hard nut covering of his true soft and holy core and will cause him or her to return to the fold and to bring back their fathers as well..

The fire came and burnt the stick

One may still ask the question while it is true that with trust, song and tough love we can be worthy of redemption, we must still recognize that we have so many imperfections. The question can therefore be asked, how we, with all of our faults and deficiencies as a people, can demand and expect to be redeemed.

The answer is through the realization that we were purified in the Mikveh of fire, as the Talmud states (*Sanhedrin* 29a): "the most primary form of immersion is in fire."

It is interesting to note that Onkelus, the Aramaic translator, renders the word fire in this week's parsha *(Tzav*) with respect to burning sacrifices that were invalidated as *nura,* the same word employed here. This is in contrast with other places where he uses the word *eishasa* for fire. This alludes to the fact that even the things that invalidate us have been purged by the fire of Galus.

The water came and extinguished the fire

Water is the most prominent metaphor for Torah. While the fire of Galus has purged our iniquity and made us worthy of redemption, the immersion in water through Torah study trumps immersion in fire and, as the Rebbe taught us it is the straightforward way to bring redemption. While suffering and pain can move us forward towards the Geulah, that is not the desired and certainly not the straightforward way.

Torah, besides its cleansing power, the Rebbe explained, has the capacity to alter our nature and the nature of our minds so that we begin to see things through the eyes of Torah. This will change our behavior and bring us into the world of redemption because we begin to live in a Moshiach oriented way. This cannot be done by suffering alone. Suffering purges and gets us ready for Geulah, but Torah transforms us and brings us into the Geulah mindset and atmosphere.

Immersion in the water of Torah prepares us for the fulfillment of the prophecy: "the

world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the sea." It will be a deluge of G-dly knowledge. The idea that water (read: Torah) will extinguish the fire means that with Torah we will no longer need the purifying power of suffering.

The ox came and drank the water

The effect of the water is that it transforms even our animal soul and energizes us even more, as it says, "the multitude of grain is by the power of the ox." When the animal soul is aroused it brings more intensity and force to one's spiritual life and makes the world which the animal soul interacts with more receptive to the divine.

The extension of the fiery passion to the animal soul is expressed by the word in the Shema "you shall love G-d with all your heart," which the Talmud states refers to both sides of the heart, where both the G-dly and animal souls reside.

The ox is also a reference to broad Torah knowledge. The Talmudic sage, Rav Yoseph,

was extolled for his encyclopedic knowledge of Jewish law (Horiyos 14a). The Talmud (Sanhedrin 42a) applies the foregoing verse, "the multitude of grain is by the power of the ox." This alludes to his encyclopedic knowledge of Jewish law which is likened to wheat.

This recalls the statement of the Talmud that the ingathering of the exiles will happen in the merit of the study of Mishnah-Jewish law.

one might also suggest that the word ox here also invokes the statement of the Talmud (*Bava Kamma* 72a) : "Because I didn't eat the meat of an ox last night i didn't fathom the deeper reason of this matter."

The "ox" can be seen as a metaphor for the power to plumb the depths of Torah. This can also be seen as a hint to the Torah of the future, that is elusive now, but will be revealed by Moshiach in the future, as it says, "A new Torah shall come from me," referring to new dimensions and depths of Torah knowledge will be revealed. We prepare for it by studying the teachings of Chassidus, the taste of the Torah of Moshiach.

In addition, the ox here alludes to Moshiach ben Yoseph, a descendant of Joseph who is likened to an ox. He is the precursor to Moshiach ben Dovid and his role is to fight the evil of the world and set the tone for Moshiach ben Dovid.

There is a suggestion, based on the Zohar, that Moshiach ben Dovid himself is also Moshiach ben Yoseph in his early stages when he fights the wars of G-d against evil after which he reveals himself in his full glory and builds the Bais Hamikdash.

The Shochet comes and slaughters the ox

According to the Talmud (*Chullin* 30b) the word for slaughtering in Hebrew *shechitah* actually means to pull upward. Moshiach ben Dovid will elevate us to an even higher position than that of the ox-Moshiach ben Yoseph.

Perhaps this is hinted in the famous enigmatic story in the Talmud (*Megillah* 7b) about how Rabbah got intoxicated on Purim

and slaughtered his colleague rabbi Zeira, the next day he brought him back to life.

The Rebbe explained that he actually caused him to die but not, G-d forbid, by using a knife, but by "pulling him up" through revealing the deepest secrets of the Torah which caused his soul to leave his body. When a person is exposed to these powerful teachings without the requisite tools it can be fatal. These teachings have the capacity to energize the soul's natural desire to escape from this physical world. There are many other examples of this in the Torah and talmud and throughout Jewish literature where dabbling in the esoteric knowledge without the proper preparations can prove fatal.

This process can be connected to the second level of love of G-d "with all your soul," which our Sages of the Mishnah state (*Berachos* 54a) "even if he takes your soul." This is the passion that is created by exposing ourselves to the deepest secrets of Torah which can generate the feeling of the soul to leave this world.

Rabbah, whose name means "great" can thus be a metaphor for the soul of Moshiach. Moshiach's role will be to raise the entire world to a higher level, but with the qualification that the world will be able to absorb this heightened G-dly light. The souls of the Jews will not leave their bodies despite their exposure to the most lofty G-dly light. In the Rebbe's terminology: it will be the sublime and powerful (Rabbah) light of Tohu (the spiritual world in which the light is too powerful for the vessels to contain it) in the ample vessels of Tikkun (the Rabbi Zeira's of the world).

In the world of gematria, the word *moshach*-pulling is the same as *kimayim layom mechasim* "as the sea covers the water," and contains the key letters of the word Moshiach.

Another gematria: Rabbah is 207 which is the same as *ohr*-light and *ein sof*-the infinite one. Zeira is the gematria of *yarei'ach*-the moon which is only capable of reflecting the light of the sun. However, in the messianic age the moon's light will be like the sun. That means

that we will be exposed to the highest level of G-dliness and be able to absorb it.

After Moshiach will reveal the secrets of the Torah and uplift the souls of all the Jewish people, the next step is:

And the Angel of Death came and slaughtered the shochet

The Midrash states the word tov-good stands for the angel of life, and tov *me'od* stands for the angel of death. Chassidus explains that it means that the ultimate good is when evil is converted into good.

One of the features of the messianic age is that it will transform all of the evil into good through teshuvah.

The purpose of the Shochet is to elevate us to the higher level within the realm of spirituality and G-dliness. The next and higher level is to elevate even the power of evil.

This parallels the third level of love, "and you shall love G-d with all your might." The word "might"-*me'od"* is the same word interpreted

as a reference to the angel of death. This is the level of love which can transform even the evil of the past into holiness through teshuvah. It is a more intense love that is engendered by the past sins that distanced one from G-d. And because the sins generated this incredible passion the sin itself turns into a positive force because it led to a more intense love of G-d. This will be the level of love that we will all experience in the messianic age.

Indeed, one of Moshiach's accomplishments is that we will even give the tzadikkim the ability to achieve the exalted level of teshuvah.

And the Holy One Blessed is He and slaughtered the Angel of Death

The next step is to even elevate the power of transformation of evil into good because there will be no more evil, as it says: "and the spirit of impurity I will remove from the earth."

This is consistent with the simple meaning of the slaughtering of the angel of death. At that time death will cease and the dead will come back to life. It is the age of eternal life. Since evil will cease to exist there will be no need and potential for death. The sin of Adam which brought death will have been rectified and hence eternal life will ensue. Moreover, we will all have the Yechidah, or essence of our souls revealed. This dimension of the soul is beyond the concept of death in the first place. It will therefore bring the resurrection of the dead and eternal life in its wake.